

The Guardian Weekly

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The Washington Post Le Monde

Protesters defy Milosevic's threats

Julian Borger in Belgrade and Ian Black in Lisbon

THE Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, was forced on to the retreat at home and abroad on Monday as 70,000 demonstrators marched through Belgrade, defying a threatened police crackdown, and foreign leaders attacked his government for annulling local elections.

A mile-long procession of opposition supporters walked through Belgrade in heavy snow waving at policemen and presenting them with flowers. The opposition vowed to maintain its campaign until the government acknowledged election victories in 15 cities last month.

Serbia also came under fire at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe summit in Lisbon where Carl Bildt, the high representative for Bosnia, warned of a "major and serious crisis" which could threaten regional stability.

A vitriolic government attack last Sunday appeared to have backfired. Dragan Tomic, the parliamentary speaker and a senior Socialist, had appeared on television vilifying the protesters as "fascists".

Opposition leaders lined up to turn Mr Tomic's remarks to their advantage. Vuk Draskovic, of the Serbian renewal movement, told the crowd: "[Tomic] called the citizens of Belgrade fascists . . . He spat on our past . . . the biggest insult in our history."



Students offer flowers to Belgrade police as protesters call for Milosevic's resignation PHOTOGRAPH: EMIL VAS

Serbia's conjugal despots

Julian Borger on the ruling couple who seem locked in a private world

IN ALL the Belgrade demonstrations of the recent days, the climactic moment came when the words Slobodan Milosevic were yelled through a microphone. The mass booing and jeering sometimes lasted more than 10 minutes. The baying for his overthrow could be heard for miles.

This is a personalised revolt against a regime which has for years resembled a court more than a modern political system. The top jobs are distributed among family friends and state resources are diverted according to personal whim. All political life revolves around Mr Milosevic and his wife Mirjana Markovic — "Slobo and Mira" — childhood sweethearts turned middle-aged despots.

It is a phenomenon so often repeated there ought to be a name for it. Like Louis and Marie Antoinette, Juan and Eva Peron, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu, Slobo and Mira seem to be locked in a private world, increasingly oblivious to the disastrous state of their country.

And like earlier despotic couples, they seem slow to respond to the catastrophe welling up around them, as if their mutual devotion negated the need for wider approval.

"They rely completely on each other and trust very few other people," said a Western diplomat who was involved in last year's Bosnian peace talks.

Mr Milosevic, a former banker whose rise through the socialist ranks was eased by his wife's family contacts, has been silent throughout the turbulent past fortnight. In fact, he has not addressed his country for more than a year. One of the students' principal demands has been for him to say something, anything, to his disgruntled people.

His wife evokes even more profound hatred. A classic Marie Antoinette, she seems unaware of the plight of her people. In her weekly magazine column she talks about Yugoslavia as if it were enjoying a golden age. Even more galling to ordinary Serbians have been her folksy, airbrushed accounts of her family life, as if the truth were not universally known.

She is the product of a brief wartime affair between two communist partisans. While Mirjana was still a baby, her mother was executed by the party on suspicion of being a German collaborator.

Her father, a high-ranking communist, did not acknowledge their blood ties until she was a dogmatic young Marxist at Belgrade university. Mr Milosevic was also abandoned by his father as a child, and his mother committed suicide.

Like the offspring of many dictators, their children are decadent losers. Their daughter, Marija, runs a disco in Belgrade. Each of her many boyfriends has been rapidly promoted, just before the relationship broke down.

Marko Milosevic, the 22-year-old prince in the Serbian court, is a failed racing driver who has crashed 19 cars. He owns a nightclub called Madonna, and recently told an interviewer that he was addicted to music, guns and cars: "I can't sit in a car alone without music and a gun. Everything has to be there. I have to have a girl, music, a car and a gun. Guns remain my passion," said the youth Mirjana Markovic calls "my wild young mustang".

After a six-year flirtation with nationalist rhetoric, the language of the Serbian court has reverted to familiar Marxist jargon. For the purposes of the November election campaign, Bosnia was treated as a far-off country to which Mr Milosevic had brought peace. He was no longer the father of all Serbs but the embodiment of "the united progressive forces of the left".

The phrase refers to the alliance of the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) and the United Yugoslav Left (JUL). The latter is not so much a political party as a vehicle for Ms Markovic and her friends.

Although JUL on its own rarely scores more than 2 per cent approval in opinion polls, and won only a handful of local council seats in November, it now controls most Serbian ministries. It is principally an economic venture: its leading members may have been former Marxist professors, but they have proved themselves remarkably adept at making money.

Mr Milosevic's indulgence of his wife and her old university friends has weakened his position. The armed forces hate JUL. The police have resisted coming under its control, but that battle is not over.

Bratislav Grubacic, a Belgrade political analyst, thinks Serbia's ruling couple may actually believe in what they are doing.

"I think in their minds, they are remaking history, and they believe they can make communism work this time. They've had their war, the partisans have won again and we will enter paradise," he said. "They have made the whole country surreal."

Washington Post, page 15

UK Budget fails to boost Tory fortunes

Martin Kettle

LABOUR is winning the battle for public opinion over the Conservatives' crucial pre-election Budget. The latest Guardian/ICM opinion poll shows that Kenneth Clarke's Budget last week has been given the thumbs-down from voters, has failed to generate the long-awaited feel-good factor for the Conservatives, and has fuelled the sharpest swing in Labour's favour since the spring.

With five months to go before the general election, Labour has opened up a 19-point lead over the Conservatives on the back of a 3 per cent swing in a single month. The adjusted December poll shows Labour on 50 per cent (up 3 per cent compared with November), Conservatives 31 (down 3), Liberal Democrats 15 (no change) and others 4.

All this would be bad enough for the Tories, especially so close to a general election, but it is compounded by a series of disastrously negative poll findings on a Budget (*see story, page 9*) by which the Government had set great electoral store. Instead, only days after the Budget, there has been a three-point fall in the percentage of voters who believe that the Tories are the best party for managing the economy.

Less than a third of all voters believe that the Budget measures will make either themselves or their families better off, and only a quarter of voters believe that the spending measures announced a week ago will improve public services.

Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Rich man's food, poor man's food

OVER the 15 years that I have subscribed to the Guardian Weekly your treatment of development issues has been generally sound. All the more surprising, therefore, to read Paul Brown's article (Food grown for the white man's table, November 24). His piece is so egregiously one-sided that a response is called for.

First, to imply that most cash crops take the form of orchids or shrimps is misleading. Cash cropping and food cultivation are not incompatible — indeed, they are often mutually supportive. In the Sahel of West Africa, rice and peanuts are major cash crops for small farmers, and the same crops are also consumed at home. Similarly in Ethiopia, where coffee is the main export, most small producers consume large quantities of their own coffee. Should they stop?

Second, cash cropping can be good for environmental sustainability. Where land use has improved over time this is often linked to intensified farming with a cash-cropping component. Take the Machakos region of Kenya, where growing population pressure and strong markets led to better, not worse, management of natural resources — something that would have been more difficult without the inflow of capital and reduced poverty.

Third, hungry people need not less aid but better aid — the right kinds of aid targeted to the right kinds of people. It is a lack of resources that perpetuates poverty, not an over-abundance. Smallholders need better access to credit, to innovations in farm technology, to improved seeds, markets, and, yes, to fertiliser. Across most of Africa it is not an "over-use" of fertiliser that is the threat to food security, but a chronic under-use. Yield increases in domestic crops will not occur without all of the above.

Fourth, what "cheap grain imports"? What "world food surplus"? The author must not have noticed that world grain prices have been at a record high for the past two years, global food stocks are currently at their lowest level since the crisis years of the 1970s, and that global food aid flows this year will also be at their lowest level since the 1970s.

Finally, the scare story about China's declining agriculture and the mass starvation that will result when China decides to purchase "all the surplus grain at world market prices". This theory was dispassionately debunked by UN experts and other scientists at the recent World Food Summit in Rome.

This kind of reporting does nothing to help the world's hungry people. Of course smallholders need to become more self-reliant, grow more food and become less poor. But, they should also be permitted to grow whatever they like, including cash crops if that results in a net improvement in their income and nutrition. How patronising to tell poor people that they should return to being subsistence farmers for the rest of their days.

(Dr) Patrick Webb,
University of Hohenheim,
Stuttgart, Germany

MICHAEL DURHAM raises an old saw in "Scrambled gene cuisine for dinner" (October 20). The fact is that genetic manipulation of flora and fauna has been going on for centuries. Today's farm crops are the result of centuries of selective breeding, cloning and interbreeding for desired traits; ditto for today's farm animals.

Yesterday's breeders used trial and error and propagation from naturally-occurring mutations. Today they use recombinant DNA methodologies to do the job in years, rather than decades, and with much greater reliability of outcome. The opponents of genetic manipulation might ponder where we would be today were it not for 4,000 years of genetic manipulation on the farm.

Robin Clulee,
Te Horo, New Zealand

Unease over the right to conceive

MARTIN KETTLE'S column (False crusade for new life after death, December 1) is the first critical look of the Diane Blood story that I have seen. All other coverage seems to narrow the story down to the fact that Mrs Blood is a woman — and therefore has an inalienable right to bear a child. It's almost as if anyone who questions the manner in which she proposes to conceive her child, via artificial insemination with sperm extracted from her comatose husband just before he was about to die, is heartless.

Mrs Blood should not be permitted to follow through with her plans for the simple reason that there is no concrete evidence that the use of her husband's sperm would be in accordance with his wishes. Not saying no is not the same thing as saying yes.

Amy Truesdell,
London

MARTIN KETTLE voiced much of the unease that I have felt in observing Diane Blood's battle to be allowed to conceive a child with her dead husband's sperm. Having also lost a partner some years ago, I have every sympathy with her, but it seems to me that what she is proposing is misguided, not only legally, but also socially and emotionally.

Her case is based on the premise that we should sanctify motherhood, and that this should override her husband's legal rights. Such "sanctification" is questionable, but if we must do it, surely we should sanctify parenthood on equal terms.

The arguments put forward also seem to accept as reasonable the virtual exclusion of men from the process of child rearing. This seems to me to send all the wrong messages — to both men and women — about who is responsible for taking care of children.

(Dr) Veronica Strang,
Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford University, Oxford

On a wing and a prayer

MAYBE Mother Teresa is a wolf in nun's clothing (though it still seems unlikely) but isn't the point that she is trying to do something? And if her critics (Sins of the missions, October 27) can do better, why aren't they doing it? There's plenty to do.

Mother Teresa is a Catholic nun. She doesn't make a secret of that. I'm sure she sees praying for the souls of the ill and dying as her priority, not as neglect. The soul is, after all, what she believes it's all about. Providing medical care is, I would imagine, her secondary concern. If it's your first concern, go and build a hospital.

As for "banning aid" (October 27), a world with problems and aid is a long way from perfect. But how is a world with no aid — or no Mother Teresa for that matter — an improvement?

And who said that Live Aid was *the* answer? Nobody as far as I can remember. Its mission was to help. Was the good samaritan wrong because he didn't go and tackle Israel's broader law and order problems? All very odd.

David Lusk,
Guiyang, China

I READ, with great interest, your article by Madeleine Bunting and Suzanne Goldenberg. I agree with the report and fully support the views of some of the disillusioned volunteers in Mother Teresa's home.

But there's one glaring fact that I don't agree with. The correspondents give the impression that in Asha Niketan, of the French L'Arche community, things are going well and the handicapped are well cared for whereas in the neighbouring homes of Mother Teresa's things are dismal. Well, I worked in Asha Niketan for almost three and a half years and finally had to leave because I, too, questioned a lot of things — and this wasn't appreciated or even heard.

The L'Arche community may not be as big and as famous as Mother Teresa's missionaries of charity but it has 100 communities worldwide and all are more or less controlled by Jean Varrier, the founder in France. Most of the money raised goes on prayer meetings, spiritual rituals, regional meetings, zonal meetings and, of course, paying for the air fares of the many foreign assistants who come to "help" for six months, and not on the basic needs of the handicapped.

Sandeepan Chatterjee,
La Poezolc, France

Big bully at the UN

ON NOVEMBER 18, Madeleine Albright's office announced, following written instructions from the secretary of state, Warren Christopher, that if Boutros Boutros-Ghali were supported for a further term as UN secretary-general, the US would consider withholding its $1 billion in dues (already scandalously in arrears).

What absurd, embarrassing and dangerous posturing. I am surprised and distressed that the Clinton administration fired such a bullying salvo as one of its first foreign policy moves in its second term in office.

Boutros-Ghali's performance is not the issue here. By all accounts and by his own demonstration, his leadership has indeed been far weaker than is necessary at a time when the Balkan states and Central Africa, to name but two, continue to implode. The US's point about leadership is well taken — but threats used to emphasise that point are not.

The US seems all too willing to overlook the ethos of membership, co-operation and equality inherent in the UN. This kind of strident action and posturing threatens to undermine the power and effectiveness of an institution that the world desperately needs.

Paul C Duffy Jr,
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Briefly

YOU object to the proposed charges to the British Museum (To charge, or not to charge?, November 17) because "free admission to museums has been a defining national characteristic of Britain". But, except for the problems involved in implementing them, you are close to agreeing with charges for overseas visitors.

Have you forgotten that many of the treasures exhibited at the British Museum, if not most, were obtained abroad free, or almost free of charge? By allowing visitors from other countries free access to those treasures, Britain has over the years partly salved its conscience. Are we to believe that Britain's conscience over its colonial past is now completely clear?

Bernardo Recamán
Bogotá, Colombia

PETER GRAHAM (Letter from Châtaigneraie, November 3) is usually interesting and amusing about his corner of France, but in this article he has fallen into a trap — we call it the Peter Mayle syndrome — of imagining that any quaint behaviour is unique to his area.

It is certainly true that the French are enthusiastic about alternative medicine and associated techniques verging on the occult: hypnotists are a flourishing profession, and reading Tarot cards is about the most popular evening class. But this applies all over France and is equally true in urban areas, as a glance at small ads in his local paper or supermarket noticeboards would tell him.

Martin Robiette,
Loches, France

WITH reference to "Children of a New Prosperity" (Washington Post, November 10), I would like to query the 1890 wage scale of \$1.15 or \$1.25 an hour. Surely this should be a day? I know for a fact that a skilled carpenter in Canada only got \$5 a day in the 1920s.

Mary L Ronayne,
Pemberton, BC, Canada

IT WAS with great sadness that I read the report of the Hull widow who left her lottery winnings of £2.1 million uncollected (November 24). Her comment was that it had all come too late.

My mother has been confined to a wheelchair these past three years, unable even to go to the toilet without assistance. All this because of a lack of funding of the National Health Service. When I asked recently what could be done for her, the cynical reply I received was that she should put her faith in the National Lottery. Oh brave New Thatcherite World!

Glyn Weldon Banks,
Espoo, Finland

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Zaire rebels make quick progress

Chris McGreal in Goma

REBELS in eastern Zaire are making rapid gains after seizing at least one key town and advancing on another of the country's largest centres.

The rebels said on Monday they had captured towns at the northern and southern ends of a 400km-long front, and had penetrated parts of the northern regional capital, Kisangani.

Missionaries said the rebels captured Beni, 225km north of Goma, last Saturday, after routing Zairean reinforcements flown in to defend it, and were advancing on the larger town of Bunia.

A Swiss-based umbrella group of missionary organisations, Action by Churches Together, said Zairean government soldiers were killing and raping as they fled northwards in panic.

"The rebels are advancing along the road to Bunia. There is complete chaos in Bunia," said a radio operator for the Mission Aviation Fellowship.

Among those flown out of Bunia by the MAF on Monday were eight Egyptian military advisers, although it was not immediately clear how long they had been in eastern Zaire. The Egyptians have trained bodyguards for President Mobutu Sese Seko and his élite special presidential division.

The fall of Beni came days after the capture of Butembo, about 50km south. Missionary sources said dozens of Zairean army vehicles were retreating towards Kisangani. If captured, the northern capital would be the biggest prize yet for the rebels.

On Monday a rebel commander in Goma, John Kabunga, claimed his forces had already reached Kisangani and controlled some parts of it. If true, it would mark an advance of about 400km in little more than a week. "We went there by bypassing the town of Walikale, which is still giving us problems," Mr Kabunga said.

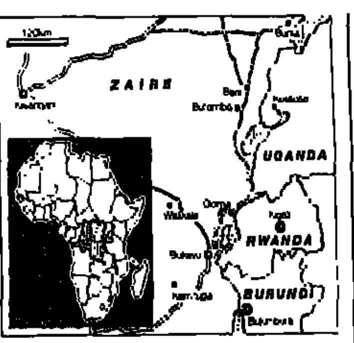
The Zairean government denied the claim. "They are dreaming," a spokesman said. "I deny categorically that they have taken the town."

The rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, said earlier in Bukavu that his forces had captured the gold and diamond mining centre of Kamituga on the southern front. Foreign personnel at Kamituga, where South Africa's Anglo American corporation has substantial interests, had fled westwards, he said.

In the area of Walikale, 120km



A Rwandan refugee carries his daughter towards a Red Cross truck near Goma. They were due to go back to Rwanda after leaving the Katale camp and wandering in the region for the past few weeks



west of Goma, Rwandan Tutsi troops and Zairean rebels were continuing to press an assault in an attempt to crush Rwandan Hutu militias and soldiers who fled refugee camps in the region. But it is not clear how much further the Rwandan army is prepared to push into the heartland of Zaire, now that it has carved out a buffer zone between Rwanda and those who would attack it.

The rebel drive north may be an attempt to prevent Hutu extremists retreating all the way to Kisangani. From Beni, the rebels can move west to sever the main road from Walikale, cutting off the Hutu retreat. Doing so would save the Rwandan army the politically charged task of pressing all the way to Kisangani, while reducing any resistance the rebels might encounter.

But it is by no means clear whether, without Rwandan troops, the rebels have the resources or popular support to carry the war across Zaire's vast hinterland. There is certainly great discontent with President Mobutu's misrule among most Zaireans, especially the hordes of workless young men. But the rebels may find it difficult to shake the widespread assumption that they are puppets of the Rwandan military.

"This is propaganda by the Zaireans in order to capture international sympathy," the rebel leader, Mr Kabila, said. "It is part of the psychological war. Will the people follow these killers? People come to us, sent by the traditional chiefs, to ask us to help them. They say the Zaireans are killing and looting. Our movement is sometimes dictated by the will of the people to liberate themselves."

The rebels have appointed civilians to administrative posts in parts of the territory they hold, but there remains considerable resentment at what many Zaireans view as a foreign occupation.

The seizure of Beni has reinforced suspicion that Uganda is giving the rebels strong support. Beni is close to an area in Zaire where the Ugandan army recently clashed with Ugandan rebels. In other parts of eastern Zaire, rebel fighters have openly identified themselves as Ugandan soldiers.

Meanwhile Hutu rebels in Burundi have launched a new offensive to prove they remain a viable force after being driven from their main bases by the war in eastern Zaire.

Renewed clashes are reported in all five of Burundi's regions and within 15km of the capital, Bujumbura. The scale of the fighting is unclear, but Innocent Nimpagaritse, the regional spokesman for the rebel National Council for the Defence of Democracy, claims it is "a massive show of force".

● The commander of a multinational force planning to drop food to hundreds of thousands of Rwandans in eastern Zaire paid a farcical visit to rebel leaders and refugees in Goma last week, before admitting that the scheme remained in question.

The rebels showed their contempt for Canadian Lieutenant-General Maurice Baril when they opened fire around a large group of refugees shortly after he passed by, sending hundreds of terrified people running and aid workers scrambling in the dirt.

The rebels gave qualified approval to the airdrops, but the Zairean government rejected them outright and aid workers poured scorn on the scheme as likely to feed soldiers rather than refugees.

Le Monde, page 13

SA troops seek amnesty for rail killings

Ruaridh Nicoll
in Johannesburg

THE apartheid military's role in the death of hundreds of rail commuters around Johannesburg in the early 1990s is about to be exposed.

More than 20 members of the disbanded 32 Battalion, all veterans of South African wars in Angola and Namibia, have applied for amnesty for their part in the killing spree that claimed 507 lives between 1990 and the 1994 election, which brought President Nelson Mandela to power.

The train violence shook even hardened South Africans, due to its brutal randomness and the victims' inability to escape. The killers would enter a carriage, pick out victims, stab them and throw them from the moving train. For commuters, the terror became a daily threat.

The former soldiers are likely to provide another glimpse of the role the upper echelons of the South African Defence Force (SADF) played in the dirty tricks campaign to keep the apartheid regime afloat. The military leaders still insist they were not involved in domestic atrocities.

The victims of the railway murders were not allied to any particular political party but included the old, the young, women singing hymns and at least one priest. Rather than an attack on any single group, the violence was designed to destabilise the country, in the hope of forcing the government to postpone the 1994 election.

The soldiers' testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will expose the orchestrators of the campaign.

Many members of 32 Battalion were Angolans who had fled their country after independence to escape Luanda's incoming Marxist MPLA government. They joined the SADF and, led by white officers, were used as expendable covert troops in the apartheid regime's wars against the MPLA and Namibia's Swapo liberation movement.

After the war, many of them joined the Civil Co-operation Bureau, a state assassination squad, and were involved in attacking the leaders of the anti-apartheid movement.

When change finally came, some joined the new South African National Defence Force, while others joined the mercenary group Executive Outcomes.

The amnesty applications have been neither confirmed nor denied by the commission. However, sources say an announcement will be made before December 14, the cut-off date for submissions.

● Twenty miners died in a mud slide at a Canadian-owned diamond mine in South Africa's Free State province last week. A river of mud washed down by heavy rains from a nearby open-cast pit quickly filled two of the eight levels within the Rovic mine, near Boshof, trapping more than 50 miners.

Rescue teams saved 34 workers before the operation had to be called off when the slides became worse. Rescued workers said the mine, bought by the Botswana Diamond Fields a year ago, was dangerous. The South African government will carry out an investigation.

Guardian Weekly goes electronic

Patrick Ensor

WITH THE **next issue the Guardian Weekly will enter the electronic age. The newspaper you read each week won't be changing, but for the first time it will be available free to subscribers in an e-mail form.**

How will it work? Each Tuesday or early Wednesday, depending on where you live in the world, we will send out from our editorial offices in London an index of all the stories, features and reviews in the forthcoming issue of the Weekly.

For simplicity's sake, the index will be divided into six sections — international news, UK news, US news, features, culture and sport.

Any news story, feature or review may be retrieved automatically via e-mail by sending a message back to our computer in London, which will automatically dispatch the item or items ordered. As an additional service, any or all the sections may be ordered in advance for automatic delivery each week. Readers should be warned, however, that a typical issue of the Weekly contains more than 50,000 words, which will make for a very bulky file if the whole issue is transmitted via e-mail.

As the e-mail service gets into its stride, so the electronic archive will start to grow. Every issue of the Weekly from now on will be stored for future access. Readers who want to retrieve a feature from the past will be able to re-order indexes from the relevant period — or search through their own index archive — and re-order the feature.

Obviously this service will be available only to those who have an e-mail address, but that includes a lot of you: the survey carried out last year revealed a high percentage of computer ownership among Weekly readers, as well as access to the growing electronic universe via modems or computer networks.

At the moment, the e-mail service will be available only to subscribers, though any suggestions as to how the service could and should be expanded to embrace our worldwide readership will be read with interest.

How to order: those who wish to receive the new e-mail service should contact the Weekly's subscriptions department in Manchester either by e-mail to gwsubs@guardian.co.uk or by fax to (+44)161-876 5362, or by ordinary mail to The Guardian Weekly, 164 Deansgate, Manchester M60 2RR, UK. Besides an e-mail address, your subscription number must be included (it's the W followed by seven digits on the wrapper address label). Failing that, include the subscriber's name and full address in any request for the e-mail service. Registration for the e-mail service may take a week or two, depending on demand.

The Guardian Weekly is not yet available on the Internet, but there is a lively and ever-expanding Guardian website at http://www.guardian.co.uk/

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
December 8 1996

The Week

ALGERIANS voted overwhelmingly in a referendum to ban religion in politics and expand presidential powers in a move to quell a five-year Islamic rebellion that has claimed 60,000 lives, the government said.

SEVEN people, four of them civilians, were killed and 20 injured as army mutineers in the Central African Republic clashed with loyalist soldiers and French troops in the capital, Bangui.

IN A blow to the candidacy of the UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the president of the Organisation for African Unity, Paul Biya, said African countries should look for new candidates for the job because of US opposition to the Egyptian incumbent.

THE Disney corporation defied Beijing's threat to retaliate against the company's business interests in China and said it would go ahead and distribute a film about the Dalai Lama and Tibet.

BARRICADES came down as French truck drivers ended a 12-day strike that had threatened to paralyse traffic and trade in western Europe. The government accepted most of the drivers' demands.

NELSON CUNHA, a Brazilian policeman, was sentenced to 261 years in prison on charges of killing eight street children. But he was automatically granted a retrial.

VICTIMS of the 1984 gas leak from the fertiliser plant in Bhopal staged a protest outside parliament in New Delhi against the dropping of manslaughter charges against executives of the US firm Union Carbide. More than 15,000 people have died from the leak.

ASIF ZARDARI, husband of the dismissed Pakistani prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, was released from a detention order by the high court in Lahore but immediately redetained on a new order from the Sindh provincial government.

THE US civil rights movement has been stunned by the release of FBI files which show that Thurgood Marshall, a leading civil rights lawyer who was later appointed to the Supreme Court, was an informer for the FBI.

THE European Commission president, Jacques Santer, has sided with Europe's tobacco growers in opposing moves to reduce cigarette consumption.

MOTHER Teresa was critically ill but conscious in a Calcutta hospital as lung and kidney problems slowed her recovery from heart surgery.

Moscow wins nuclear pledge

Ian Black in Lisbon

NATO will publicly promise not to deploy nuclear weapons in former communist countries that join the alliance in an attempt to defuse opposition from Russia to Nato's expansion eastwards, it emerged this week.

Nato officials at the Lisbon summit of the Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) said on Monday, after an agreement was reached on revising a key treaty on arms control, that the pledge would be made in Brussels next week.

The alliance is expected to say it will not deploy tactical nuclear forces in eastern and central Europe "under foreseeable circumstances", going public with a commitment so far made only privately. Other commitments are likely on non-nuclear forces.

Nato is expected to start accession talks with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic next summer, despite warnings from Moscow that it risks drawing new dividing lines in post-cold war Europe.

Russia kept up the pressure at the 54-country OSCE conference. "We declare clearly our firm opposition to plans by the North Atlantic alliance to move itself and its military infrastructure towards our territory," the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, said.

"Is it not clear that the appearance of new dividing lines would lead to a worsening of the whole geopolitical situation in the world?"

Western diplomats said his objections and those in a written message from President Boris Yeltsin were more muted than usual. They pointed to the agreement updating the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe treaty as evidence of attempts to keep Moscow happy.

The US vice-president, Al Gore, also offered reassurance, insisting Nato would remain a "defensive alliance" seeking a "strong co-operative relationship" with Russia.

US diplomats are saying publicly that the revised treaty is not intended to "compensate" Moscow for Nato expansion, but in practice the Russians will be able to use it to restrict deployments in former Warsaw pact countries.

Nato members had hoped to sidestep the expansion issue in Lisbon but were put on the spot by Russian protests. The last OSCE summit, in Budapest, was dominated by a warning from Mr Yeltsin that Europe faced "a cold peace" if expansion proceeded.

Western leaders also made it clear that Russia would not succeed in giving the OSCE a more formal role, despite its ambitious plans to publish a "blueprint for European security in the 21st century".

● President Jacques Chirac has told Bill Clinton that transferring Nato's southern command from a United States to a European officer is of "capital importance" to France, according to a leaked letter.

A caged young monk is paraded in New Delhi in a protest by 700 Tibetan exiles at the arrival of China's president, Jiang Zemin, in the city last week. The boy represented the Panchen Lama, who they say was abducted by China shortly after he was named by the Dalai Lama in 1995 PHOTOGRAPH: SAURABH DAS

Pact likely to seal victory for NZ leader

Giles Wilson in Wellington

EIGHT weeks after an inconclusive general election, New Zealand looked likely to have a government again this week. It was expected that National would remain in power.

When the haggling began after the election, a coalition led by Labour emerged as the front-runner. It would have made Helen Clark the country's first woman prime minister.

The two parties have been trying to win the support of Winston Peters, the wild-card Maori leader of the nationalist party New Zealand First, since the election on October 12. The fact that the negotiations have dragged on so long and covered so many policy areas suggests that the three parties were hoping to form long-term alliances, making the stakes particularly high.

The irony of Mr Peters backing the National leader, Jim Bolger, will not be lost on voters: Mr Peters formed his party after being thrown out of National in 1993, and he and Mr Bolger have made no secret of their personal enmity.

Mr Peters has repeatedly said Mr Bolger's resignation would be a precondition of a coalition, but his change of heart suggests that National has agreed to adopt more liberal social policies, allowing him to claim the credit with his core support groups — the elderly and Maoris.

With Labour he would not have been able to take the credit for a liberal agenda.

The risk is that if he keeps National in power without significant policy changes he risks alienating his supporters, particularly his Maori backers, who have traditionally supported Labour.

He recognised this dilemma last weekend when he told his constituency party: "As we go to make this decision, we are in a no-win situation. We are going to disappoint a great number of our supporters, our party supporters and a significant proportion of the public of this country, no matter what we do."

Aids claims 6.4 million lives

Chris Mihill

THE Aids and HIV epidemic is continuing to spread across the world with a dramatic growth in many countries, including those of eastern Europe, the head of the United Nation's Aids programme warned last week.

Releasing new figures to mark World Aids Day last Sunday, Peter Piot, executive director of UNAids, told a press conference in London that 8,500 people were being infected by HIV every day across the world.

During the past year there were 3.1 million new HIV infections, and 1.5 million deaths, bringing the total number estimated to be living with HIV to around 23 million. Since the illness was recognised in the early 1980s, there has been a cumulative total of 29.4 million HIV infections, with 8.4 million Aids cases and 6.4 million deaths.

"The HIV epidemic is . . . gaining momentum in many countries and continues to strengthen its grip on the world's most vulnerable populations," Dr Piot said.

He said the majority of the 2.7 million adults infected over the past year were aged under 25, and half were women. There were 400,000 new infections among children in 1996, bringing the total number living with HIV to more than 800,000.

Dr Piot said there was rising concern over the "sky rocketing" increase in HIV in many parts of the former Eastern bloc. In some Black Sea towns in the Ukraine, the percentage of HIV infected people among injecting drug users rose from 1.7 per cent in January 1995 to 56.5 per cent 11 months later.

He said HIV was spreading rapidly in Asia, and in parts of southern Africa rates among pregnant women had reached 40 per cent.

Although a heterosexual explosion of HIV had not occurred in the UK, the number of such infections was slowly increasing, Dr Piot said.

Comment, page 12

Police brutality 'rife'

Reuter in Jerusalem

ISRAEL'S attorney-general said last week that incidents of police brutality against Palestinians such as that captured on video in October were widespread.

"After reviewing the figures issued to me . . . I am convinced that we're talking about a severe and widespread phenomenon," Michael Ben-Yair said in a letter sent to the internal security minister a week after a video was broadcast showing two border policemen beating Palestinians. "The experience that investigators accumulated indicates that this is a phenomenon and not just an aberration."

His remarks contrasted with the reaction of other Israeli officials to the incident, filmed by an amateur video cameraman. The prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, condemned the incident but said it was rare.

Palestinians frequently complain about abuse by border policemen who patrol the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The internal security minister, Avigdor Kahalani, told Israel Radio in response to the letter: "We cannot accept this in our society . . . but we must also refrain from pouncing on these people and placing all the blame on them."

An Israeli court charged the two border policemen last week with aggravated assault and abuse of authority. Four other border policemen were charged with beating a Palestinian unconscious after detaining him last June.

Meanwhile Israeli ministers extended by three months authorisation for the Shin Bet security service to use force in interrogation of Palestinians when it appears a guerrilla attack is imminent, Israel Radio said. The prime minister's office refused to comment.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
December 8 1996

Warlords in Liberia get 'last chance'

Claudia McElroy in Monrovia

AMID the debris of shattered buildings and graffiti-covered shop-fronts, closed since the wave of carnage and looting that devastated Monrovia in April, business appears to be booming for some of the city's more brazen entrepreneurs.

The numerous markets — selling everything from freezers to toilet seats — lure crowds of customers hoping to retrieve their own looted property. But with food shortages, outbreaks of disease and general insecurity, there is little sign that life is improving after years of civil war.

What began in 1989 as a rebel incursion from neighbouring Ivory Coast by faction leader Charles Taylor escalated into brutal warfare, with increasing numbers of self-styled freedom fighters battling over the country's rich natural resources.

Numerous diplomatic and military initiatives, including the intervention in 1990 of the West African peace-keeping force, Ecomog, failed to end the violence that has killed about 200,000 people and forced more than half the 2.8 million population to flee.

The latest peace agreement, concluded in the Nigerian capital Abuja in August and approved by the four main warlords, now promises to succeed where its 13 predecessors have failed.

It provides for disarmament of 60,000 fighters before the end of January 1997, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections at the end of May and the installation of a new government in mid-June — and carries the threat of sanctions against any reneging leader.

Not only can the warlords' assets be frozen and their freedom to travel restricted, they may also be barred from elections and face a war crimes tribunal. This has encouraged hope that the faction leaders may finally be pushed into keeping their promises.

Ruth Perry, head of the interim council of state, and the first woman in Africa to hold such a position, appears cautiously optimistic: "I believe the sub-region is serious about sanctions . . . but the leaders must abide by their promises in order for the international community to have any confidence in us."

Yet the peace process is already running into familiar hitches. Violent crime and looting in Monrovia has resurged since a recent assassination attempt on Mr Taylor, despite a dusk-to-dawn curfew.

The disarmament process, which began on November 22, has also been hampered by a lack of co-ordination, verbal mud-slinging between national and international agencies, and a dearth of resources.

"I get the impression the world is fed up with Liberia," said United Nations special representative in Liberia, Anthony Nyakyi. "The [peace accord] is the Liberians' last opportunity, otherwise they may find themselves on their own."

Robert Lacville, page 24

Burmese junta 'aids heroin trade'

Nick Cumming-Bruce

THE seizure by Burma's authorities in three raids last month of more heroin than was netted in the whole of last year represents a rare success for the country's police. But Burma's ruling military junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc), can expect scant praise from Western officials for the operation, which intercepted 107kg of the drug.

The seizure is a drop in the ocean of heroin leaking from the country, already the world's largest producer and now, according to Western officials, preparing for a bumper year with the complicity of the regime.

"Slorc is protecting the drug trade and flaunting its defiance of international concern," Robert Gelbard, the United States assistant secretary of state for narcotics, wrote in a recent article.

In Bangkok last week President Bill Clinton singled out Burma for criticism for trafficking, while praising Thailand — which has had some recent successes against the drug trade.

Last month Thai police arrested a man wanted by the US in connection with 168kg of heroin intercepted in New Orleans three years ago. He is suspected of being linked to 400kg of the drug seized by the FBI in New York. Thai police also detained two important dealers indicted in New York for the biggest heroin haul ever recorded in the US: 486kg uncovered in Oakland, California, in 1991.

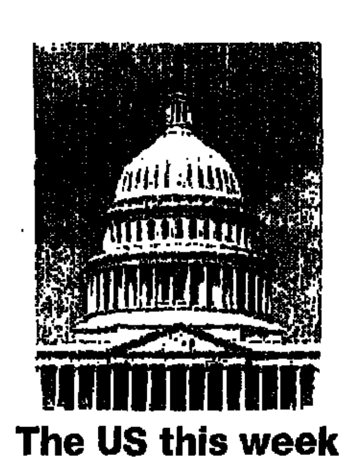
Washington also hopes 13 other suspected traffickers will be extradited to the US after the most spectacular strike of the year, "Operation Tiger Trap" which detained associates of Khun Sa, the Burmese opium warlord. "There have been more arrests here [Thailand] than anywhere else in the region," a US official said.

By contrast, 10 months after his "surrender" to Burma's military rulers, Khun Sa not only remains unpunished but is living in Rangoon apparently free to pursue a career in business. Official sources in Chiang Mai say both Khun Sa and his former aide, Chang Shuchuan, are active in Shan state investing in a planned casino and hotel. "These two men are responsible for part of the financing of the Burmese army," one veteran observer said.

The drug business is booming in northeastern Burma, where Khun Sa's surrender opened the way for a tightening of Rangoon's control. Opium production in the country has doubled since the Slorc came to power in 1988 and is likely to grow.

Areas controlled by heavily armed Wa, Kokang and other ethnic groups are now some of the main centres of opium production. Most ethnic groups have signed ceasefire deals with the Slorc, in return for which diplomats say they are left free to ply the drug trade.

Investigations cast a shadow on Clintons



The US this week

Martin Walker

PRESIDENT Clinton returned from an agreeable Asian tour, in which he much enjoyed himself in Australia, where for once he and Mrs Clinton were able to stroll like tourists in the Rocks area of Sydney and stop on impulse at a coffee bar. He also pulled off a rather better agreement to free trade in information technology than had initially seemed likely at the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference in Manila.

At breakfast with President Fidel Ramos of the Philippines, Clinton reviewed the tentative agreement reached by the Apec trade ministers, and said: "This is unacceptable — we have to do better." Ramos then rewrote the communiqué, and Clinton and his staff spent the rest of the day lobbying the other Asian leaders to achieve the far more ambitious Information Technology Agreement.

"He spent 16 hours straight on the most intensive public-private diplomacy I have ever seen," Fred Bergsten told the Guardian. The director of the Institute for International Economics, Bergsten has also been the chairman of the Eminent Persons Group which dreamed up the Apec process and drafted its ambitious regional free trade agreement. He was asked by Ramos to act as sherpa to ensure the success of this year's Apec summit.

Bergsten, a former senior official in the Treasury, is also being strongly tipped by White House insiders as Clinton's next choice for a top trade job, whether to run the National Economic Council, to be secretary of commerce, or to become US trade representative. He should know soon enough. Clinton returned from Asia to call at the White House for the annual ritual of pardoning the Thanksgiving turkey donated to him each year, before heading for Camp David to spend this most American of holidays, and to ponder his future.

The next three months will decide the fate of Clinton's second term, both in the sense that he will choose his new cabinet and new administration, and in that his legal fate will be decided. By the end of that period, Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel charged with the Whitewater investigation and its various and associated new inquiries, has revealed that he will have decided whether or not to proceed with new indictments.

The White House now expects new charges against the president's friends and former business associates to be filed next year, a senior lawyer for Clinton admitted for the first time last week. In her last interview before leaving the president's office, White House associate counsel Jane Sherburne told USA Today that the president's lawyers "had expected indictments by the end of the year".

That timetable has apparently slipped, now that Clinton's old partner in the Whitewater investment, James McDougal, is co-operating with Starr in the hope of getting a lenient sentence for his fraud convictions. "With Starr taking testimony from McDougal until February, and the time it will take to confirm anything he says, there will be no indictments before then," Ms Sherburne said.

Some good news has seeped out from the tight-lipped team of lawyers and investigators assembled by Starr. After a prolonged review, it has now been decided that Vince Foster, the former deputy White House counsel, did indeed commit suicide in July 1993, and was not bumped off by Arkansas hit-squads as the wilder conspiracy theorists of the Internet have suggested. That only leaves fraud, perjury, obstruction of justice and making false statements as the legal perils that could in theory lie in store for the Clintons and their friends. The key words in the foregoing sentence are "in theory". The balance of probabilities, on the evidence so far available, is that neither Mr nor Mrs Clinton should expect to be charged with any crime, although their staff may not be spared. It is possible that Mrs Clinton could be accused of being rather too economical with the truth in telling the first federal investigators from the General Accounting Office that she had no part in the sacking of the White House travel office staff in 1993.

There is some evidence, including handwritten notes from White House staff, that she took a rather more prominent role. But even a charge of "making false statements" would have to be heard before a Washington jury, drawn from the most loyal Democratic constituency in the country. Independent counsel, even when they are partisan Republicans, seldom file charges on which they do not think they can secure a conviction. Nor do they lightly embroil the nation in unprecedented constitutional drama.

Still, the worst could happen, and Clinton has appointed Lanny Davis, a veteran Democratic lawyer with a chequered past, as his new special White House counsel to deal with the Whitewater affair and other possible legal entanglements. Davis will replace Mark Fabiani and Sherburne, who have resigned in part because of their unhappiness at the way their advice was frequently overruled by the president's old Arkansas friend, Bruce Lindsey. Lindsey's loyalty to the president is beyond question. He is the consigliere to Clinton's godfather, and always at his side, despite that embarrassment last year when Lindsey was named "an unindicted co-conspirator" by the prosecution when two Arkansas bankers were tried on charges of breaking the election finance rules during governorship elections in the 1980s. The prosecution, brought by Starr's staff, failed to secure a conviction, but the affair gave Lindsey more prominence than he usually seeks.

The spotlight is unlikely to fade. The two outgoing lawyers from the White House also complain that Lindsey put them in an impossible position during the election campaign, when he characterised the president's meetings with the Indonesian banker Mokhtar Riady as "social calls". It has now been admitted that there were 15-20 such meetings, and that the conversations with Riady, who is at the heart of new campaign finance scandal over dubious donations from Asian sources, included US trade and strategic policies in Asia.

Congressman Gerald Solomon, chairman of the House International Relations committee, made it clear that last week that the Republicans are determined to leave no stone unturned in their own new inquiries in this area. He demanded "all information concerning contacts, agreements of other dealings" between the Commerce Department and Riady and his associates concerning "any influence on US policy and the normalisation of relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam".

Washington law firms are steadily filling with former legal advisers to the White House who didn't relish the experience

The FBI has launched a potentially criminal investigation into the Democratic party's fund-raising from Asian sources, even as the Democrats are scrambling to reimburse the donations and to stonewall congressional demands for documents which could shed light on the affair.

Five House committee chairmen sent a letter of protest late last month at the Clinton administration's refusal to hand over 33 National Security Council documents relating to foreign trade missions which have been linked to the fund-raising scandal. This means that a new clash between White House and congressional prerogatives is expected when Congress returns after the Thanksgiving holiday.

The Asian funding scandal is now threatening to reach critical mass. The Democratic National Committee has returned more than half of the $2.5 million raised for the party by John Huang, a former employee of the Indonesian-based Lippo Group, who then took a senior post in Clinton's commerce department before becoming a full-time Democratic fund-raiser.

Late last month, the DNC announced that it was returning $450,000 donated to the party by Arief Wiriadinata, a landscape gardener whose father-in-law was a top Lippo bank official. The DNC claimed throughout the election campaign that this was a legal donation, since Wiriadinata was a legal US resident although not a citizen. The DNC now says that they are no longer sure of his legal resident status, since Wiriadinata did not file a tax return this year.

The $1.27 million raised by Huang, which the DNC has now returned, included donations of $5,000 at a fund-raiser in a Buddhist temple in California which Vice-President Al Gore attended. It was these payments that attracted the FBI's interest. Among the donors were Buddhist nuns and priests, who have taken oaths of poverty. They said they were handed $5,000 in cash, and then asked to sign cheques in their own names.

The FBI investigating team, from its public integrity unit, is expected to report shortly to the attorney-general, Janet Reno, whether these are sufficient grounds to empower a separate independent counsel into the affair, as Senator John McCain of Arizona has demanded. Clinton has already wooed McCain, the Republican co-sponsor of a campaign finance reform bill with Democratic Senator Russ Feingold, promising to support the bill and sign it as soon as it can pass Congress.

The other prong of the counter-attack comes from supposedly independent convictions of James Carville, Clinton's colourful former campaign strategist. Carville hails from Louisiana, and is still widely known by his 1992 campaign nickname of "the ragin' Cajun". He announced last week that he was forming a new campaign to attack the credentials of the independent counsel already investigating the various Whitewater-related scandals.

"We're gonna bring the truth about Kenneth Starr and his partisan political agenda to the American people, raising money, taking out ads and TV spots. We're going to go to the campuses and raise a staff of bright young people," Carville declared. "I'm sick of this nutty appeasement strategy for a guy like Starr, who detests this president."

The campaign finance issue joins the initial Whitewater inquiry and a host of other controversies in the crammed portfolio of alleged presidential crimes that now awaits Davis. He has been acquainted with the Clintons since their time together at Yale law school in the early 1970s, where they also worked together in a 1970 Senate campaign in Connecticut. He will now become the main spokesman on Whitewater matters, with a presidential promise that he will not be supervised by Lindsey, as well as chief legal co-ordinator for the Clintons' legal defences within the White House.

Davis will be a busy man, facing new congressional and legal inquiries into the sacking of the White House travel office staff, where Mrs Clinton could face charges of obstructing justice and even perjury, into the improper collection of FBI confidential files on leading Republicans, and into the sexual harassment case against Clinton filed by Ms Paula Jones, a former Arkansas state employee. The Supreme Court has yet to rule whether or not Ms Jones will be able to bring her highly embarrassing action while the president remains in office.

Davis, a Democratic congressional candidate in Maryland in 1976, then ran into trouble when his opponents found that he had falsely claimed to have graduated with "cum laude" honours from Yale, and had also overblown his status as a humble campaign volunteer for other Democratic campaigns.

"Clinton and Lanny are perfect for each other. We are now marrying two of the world's greatest self-promoters," Blair Lee, a Maryland developer and former Democratic campaign manager who worked with Davis, said last week. A political commentator for the local national public radio station in Washington, Davis is now a highly paid Washington lawyer and lobbyist, and a powerful if controversial figure in local Democratic politics.

"There is a perception that Lanny is always out for Lanny," noted Jay Bernstein, a former Democratic county chairman. In his new job, Davis will have to put the president first. His reward is uncertain. The law firms of Washington are steadily filling with former legal advisers for the three most powerful lawyers in the White House — the two Clintons and Lindsey — none of whom relished the experience.

Dragged down by Italian job

The fall of Di Pietro, once corruption's scourge , is a disaster for clean politics, writes **John Hooper** in Rome

FOR ALMOST two years now, the Italian people have been watching as Antonio Di Pietro, the lawyer who dared to try to clean up public life, has been gradually but remorselessly demolished.

The story began in 1992, when Mr Di Pietro, then a relatively obscure prosecutor in Milan, brought charges against a middle-ranking figure in the local Socialist Party. It was the start of an investigation that would lay bare a part of the web of corrupt relationships that underpinned Italy's old order.

Last week, the drama entered what is perhaps its climactic, but not necessarily final, act in a courtroom in the northern town of Brescia. On trial, among others, are Silvio Berlusconi's brother, Paolo, and one of the TV tycoon's closest confidants, Cesare Previti, who at different times has been Mr Berlusconi's lawyer, a member of his Cabinet and the organiser of his party.

The two men are charged with blackmailing Mr Di Pietro into resigning as a prosecutor two years ago, at the height of his power, as he was about to interrogate Mr Berlusconi, then prime minister, about bribery claims. When the dossier of financial irregularities they are alleged to have compiled came to light, the former prosecutor was brought to court. The judge decided not only that the accusations against Mr Di Pietro were groundless, but that they constituted a reason for indicting Previti and Paolo Berlusconi.

Mr Di Pietro had every right to expect the hearing in Brescia would bring him revenge. What he got instead was repudiation of a breathtakingly unpleasant kind. His former boss, Francesco Saverio Borrelli, the head of the "Clean Hands" anti-corruption prosecutors, testified that at a meeting to discuss tactics before Mr Berlusconi's interrogation, Mr Di Pietro said he intended to "break" Mr Berlusconi. With a single phrase, his crusade against graft acquired the air of a personal vendetta.

Mr Borrelli's team is nowadays in deep trouble, its mission and methods questioned as much by Italy's centre-left government as by its rightwing opposition. The most charitable explanation of its chief's behaviour is that he was signalling he longer wished to be linked with a troublesome erstwhile subordinate.

After Mr Borrelli's testimony, two of his deputies went to the witness stand and corroborated his version.

It is a remarkable change from three years ago, when the nation admired the televised courtroom performances of a farm boy from obscure Molise. With his unfashionable southern accent and his uncompromising bluntness, Mr Di Pietro was made for the role of exterminating angel.

What the public saw in Mr Di Pietro was a man of obsessive honesty. What the public failed to see was that it would be a grave mistake to try to put his probity to political use. But it is an abiding conviction among Italians that anyone who has become a resounding success in his or her particular walk of life is entitled to enter politics.

Mr Di Pietro was determined to do so. Within days of doffing his barrister's gown, he was being tipped by weighty columnists as the leader of Italy's next government. The fact that his political views were unknown, that he had never held elected office or run a department of more than a few dozen people seemed to worry no one.

But, with time, Mr Di Pietro's lack of experience and aptitude have become only too painfully obvious. Within months, he fell straight into Mr Berlusconi's trap. He accepted an invitation to meet the media tycoon at his home, thus enabling Mr Berlusconi, who was already formally under investigation for corruption, to go on television and reveal the fact. The implication was that, since he was on such chummy terms with Italy's "Mr Clean", he could scarcely be up to his neck in graft. Mr Di Pietro then compounded his mistake by attempting to deny their encounter, tarnishing his reputation for honesty.

What the episode illustrated was a contradiction that has hampered the former prosecutor's career in politics from the start. He is naturally a man of the right. A police officer before he became a lawyer, he shares many of the opinions you would expect to hear aired in your local police locker room.

Yet it so happens that the Italian right is led by Mr Berlusconi, who has good reason for wanting to see the fall of Mr Di Pietro and the end of the anti-graft crusade he initiated.



Di Pietro: brought down by his own debilities and the machinations of his enemies PHOTOGRAPH: GRAZIA NERI

The circle appeared to square last spring when Mr Di Pietro took up Romano Prodi's invitation to join his cabinet as public works minister. It seemed the ideal job — a practical task for a practical man. What is more, it put him in a position to pursue his war on sleaze, since much of it springs from the award of public construction orders.

Unfortunately, what came to the fore was not so much his righteousness as the impatience and intolerance that have led critics to see in him the makings of an authoritarian populist.

But what led to his resignation was the appearance of new evidence to suggest that Mr Di Pietro might not be as much of a straight-dealer as he seems. What it comes down to is that someone claimed, in a tapped telephone conversation, to have wriggled free of a corruption inquiry because he was Mr Di Pietro's friend. On that basis alone, the former prosecutor has once again been placed under investigation.

The underlying message — that Mr Di Pietro too could have skeletons in his cupboard — is a formula for something more than moral relativism. What it implies is that, if the very symbol of the Clean Hands campaign has dirty hands, then no one is honest, and to continue with the drive against corruption is not merely pointless but hypocritical.

It is a splendid argument for the hundreds of Italian politicians and financiers who still face possible trial and disgrace, but a profoundly worrying one for all those who believed that Mr Di Pietro's investigation was the start of a "quiet revolution".

The Week in Britain James Lewis

MP's jibe at 'blue-eyed' nurses sparks race row

DIANE ABBOTT, one of Labour's very few black MPs, shot herself in the foot when she castigated the health authority in her east London constituency of Hackney for employing "blond, blue-eyed Finnish nurses" instead of nurses from the Caribbean "who know the language and understand British culture and institutions".

At Homerton Hospital, which Ms Abbott was criticising, 11 per cent of the staff are black Caribbean, which exactly matches the black Caribbean population of Hackney. Seventeen other ethnic minority groups are also employed there, together accounting for 42 per cent of the nursing staff.

Part of the MP's complaint was that the Scandinavian nurses "may never have met a black person before, let alone touched one". But, had she inquired more closely, she would have discovered that at least one of the Finnish nurses was herself black, and that few of the others were either blonde or blue-eyed.

Ms Abbott was accused not only of racial stereotyping but of ignorance of the facts. Homerton, like many others hospitals in the UK, is having to trawl the world for staff which it cannot recruit locally. Another 20 Finns are due to arrive there next year, and will be joined by 10 from South Africa, some black, others white.

The Department of Health, which has admitted a mistake in forecasting recruitment needs, is launching a £750,000 advertising campaign to recruit more nurses, and putting an extra £31 million into nurse training.

FIVE Cabinet ministers complained that they were being undermined by the "bully-boy" tactics of the abrasive Conservative party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, whose unenviable job it is to stick the boot into Labour and try to win the Conservatives a fifth term in office.

The party chairman has a seat in the Cabinet, but Dr Mawhinney's ministerial critics accuse him of meddling in policy instead of concentrating on electioneering. They suspect him of briefing against them to the press, and backing the party's rightwingers and Eurosceptics who, according to the Central Office view, say what grassroots Tory voters most want to hear.

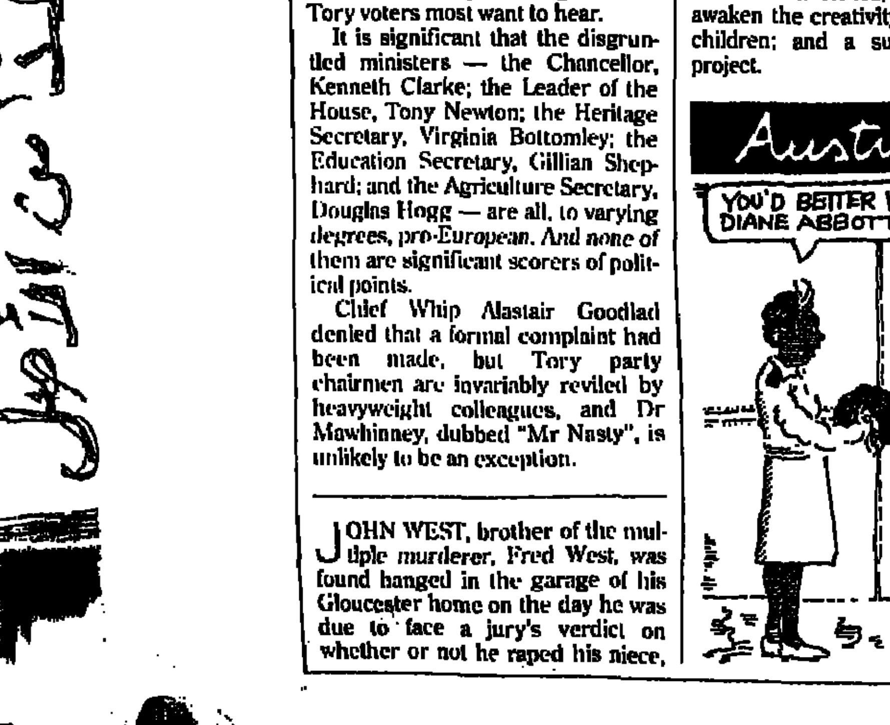
It is significant that the disgruntled ministers — the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke; the Leader of the House, Tony Newton; the Heritage Secretary, Virginia Bottomley; the Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard; and the Agriculture Secretary, Douglas Hogg — are all, to varying degrees, pro-European. And none of them are significant scorers of political points.

Chief Whip Alastair Goodlad denied that a formal complaint had been made, but Tory party chairmen are invariably reviled by heavyweight colleagues, and Dr Mawhinney, dubbed "Mr Nasty", is unlikely to be an exception.

JOHN WEST, brother of the multiple murderer, Fred West, was found hanged in the garage of his Gloucester home on the day he was due to face a jury's verdict on whether or not he raped his niece, Anne-Marie Davis (Fred's daughter) and another woman.

Fred West was charged with 12 murders, but hanged himself in prison before he could be brought to trial. His wife, Rosemary, was later imprisoned for life for her involvement in some of the murders. John took part in the sexual activities at his brother's home in the 1970s, but police say there was no evidence to link him to the murders.

Anne-Marie Davis claimed John West raped her 300 times at her parents' home, which has since been demolished. The full story of what went on there has still not been told, and further prosecutions are possible.



CAMPAIGNERS against field sports reacted swiftly to the news that Prince William, aged 14, had shot his first stag while on holiday from Eton. Accompanied by his father, the Prince of Wales, and his younger brother, Prince Harry, he made the kill on the Balmoral estate shortly before the legal end of the stag-shooting season on October 20.

The Royal Family's continuing affection for country sports involving guns enrages opponents of field sports, and the celebration of the prince's "first kill" was in stark contrast with the killings at Dunblane and that community's anti-gun campaign.

Kevin Saunders, of the League Against Cruel Sports, said his organisation despaired of the royal family, "who exhibit the morals of brutalitarians and set a dreadful example at a time when society is moving away from the gun culture".

CAMELOT may lose its contract to run the National Lottery, or face a cap on its £1 million-a-week profit, if Labour wins the next general election. The party says that it would award the contract to a non-profit-making organisation when it expires at the end of seven years, and use the resulting cash to supplement — but not replace — existing education programmes.

The shadow education secretary, David Blunkett, said Labour might use lottery money to fund after-school activities; homework centres for pupils who lacked space to study in their own homes; arts projects to awaken the creativity of disaffected children; and a summer schools project.



Bomb shows IRA 'fear peace'

David Sharrock

A MASSIVE bomb found by security forces in Ulster as John Major outlined the terms for Sinn Fein's entry into all-party talks was intended to blow up an army base, the RUC believes.

It was hidden on a trailer by a road half a mile from the Drumadd army base outside Armagh city. Exactly four years ago an IRA bomb exploded at the same spot, seriously injuring several people.

The bomb contained 2,500lb of home-made explosives, hidden under bales of straw and black sheeting. Its design bears the hallmarks of the Provisional IRA, according to security sources.

It is the second bomb in the past fortnight to be neutralised by the security forces, and Unionists seized on it as evidence to support Mr Major's demands for greater proof than a reinstatement of an IRA ceasefire that the Provisionals are genuinely committed to a peace settlement.

David Adams, of the loyalist Ulster Democratic Party, said the bomb "proves beyond a shadow of doubt that whilst one strand of republicanism displays an eagerness to get into substantive negotiations with all other parties on a democratic basis, the IRA to date has shown the true position of republicanism whereby they are actually frightened to join in a truly peaceful and democratic process."

Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, said: "We want to see Sinn Fein in these talks, but on the same terms as everyone else — a ceasefire declared and with no implicit reliance upon bombs."

Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness, said the Government appeared set on excluding republicans from talks. "I think even if this incident had not occurred it appears that the British government and the Unionists are quite determined to keep Sinn Fein away from the negotiating table *ad infinitum*."

At the weekend, the SDLP leader, John Hume, insisted that a renewed IRA ceasefire by Christmas was still possible. He said: "In spite of last week, my experience tells me that there is a major opportunity to bring about a complete end to violence."

● Two women were given hospital treatment after they were attacked leaving mass on Saturday evening in a strongly loyalist area of Northern Ireland.

The women were driving home from Our Lady's chapel in Harryville, Ballymena, Co Antrim, when their vehicles were attacked. Rioters among the 200 protesters picketing the church later hijacked and burned a bus. It was the worst violence outside the church since the picket began in September, as a counter demonstration when Orange marches near Ballymena were blocked.

Unionist politicians, including Ian Paisley junior, have said the picketing should end, but the loyalists say they will continue their protest until Orangemen are allowed to parade to and from an annual church service held in the largely nationalist Antrim village of Dunloy.

The Orangemen were prevented from marching in the summer and again last month, when there was reportedly a deal struck which was then broken.

A bus left burning by loyalists after they picketed a Roman Catholic church in Ballymena and attacked worshippers PHOTO: PAUL McERLANE

Synod blocks heresy trials for clergy

Madeleine Bunting

MEMBERS of the General Synod — the Church of England's governing body — last week narrowly defeated an attempt by its evangelical lobby to bring back heresy trials.

Synod members carried a motion against allowing disputes over doctrine and belief to come before a proposed national system of Church of England disciplinary tribunals.

The new tribunals are to have no jurisdiction over matters of doctrine, the synod decided in a move to avoid witch-hunts against clergy with unorthodox theological views.

Lobby groups such as the conservative evangelical group, Reform, had mobilised considerable support in the Synod to back the proposal, which they saw as an opportunity to harass doctrinal opponents.

However, several speakers said it would inhibit the free and honest inquiry of thought that has characterised Anglicanism and had produced thinkers such as the Right Reverend David Jenkins, the former Bishop of Durham, whose radical questioning of Christianity would have made him vulnerable to a heresy trial.

The Synod decided to throw out another key item of the proposed reform limiting the political activity of clergy. Members defended clerics' political activism as a vital part of their Christian belief.

The Synod also agreed to end the 800-year-old tradition of reading the banns of marriage in parish churches.

Banns have to be read three times in a church, and the congregation is asked to declare if they know of any "just cause or impediment" why the couple should not be married. But the clergy told the Synod meeting at Westminster last week that the time-consuming process is pointless since the couple is rarely known by parishioners and it gives a negative and legalistic impression of the Church's attitude to marriage.

In a similar move neither parents nor godparents would have to declare they are practising Christians at the baptism of a child if the Church of England adopts proposals discussed by the Synod.

The revisions — denounced by evangelicals as a "soft option" — have been proposed to avoid an "uneasy impression of dishonesty" and "suspicion of hypocrisy" caused by parents eager to have their child baptised who may not be regular churchgoers.

● The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, was due in Rome this week for his first official visit to the Vatican and first meeting with the Pope since the Church of England opted for the ordination of women.

Pope John Paul is vehemently opposed to any such move by the Roman Catholic Church and sees the Anglicans' decision as having made a reconciliation all but impossible.

The issue is so sensitive that a source close to Dr Carey said that the two men might not even discuss it at their meeting on Thursday.

Women's ordination is nevertheless a key reason behind Dr Carey's visit. The issue has helped to destroy the traditional balance in the Anglican Church, split between evangelicals, liberals and more conservative Anglo-Catholics.

Dr Carey hopes to bolster the morale of Anglo-Catholics who lost out in elections at the last Synod.

Clarke opts for a cautious Budget

Guardian Reporters

THE Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke last week turned his fourth Budget into one of the most cautious in the history of electioneering, banking on strong economic growth and a modest 1p tax cut to deliver the Conservatives a fifth election victory next spring.

With one eye on the City, the Chancellor trimmed public spending, pledged to hit the Government's 2.5 per cent inflation target, and invited voters to trust the Tories to deliver steady prosperity into the new millennium.

Playing the Tories' last card before the election, Mr Clarke's package was designed to appeal to the swing voters of Middle England. It cut the basic rate of income tax to 23p in the pound, increased the value of tax allowances and raised spending on health and education while supporting married couples and removing top-up benefits from single parents.

Overall, the Budget is set to reduce taxes by only £735 million next year, because income tax reductions will be offset by dearer tobacco, petrol, insurance, higher airport taxes, and a crackdown on tax avoidance.

Mr Clarke told the Commons that a tight Budget was needed to keep interest rates low and ensure that the economy grows by the expected 3.5 per cent in 1997. With consumer spending projected to rise by 4 per cent, the Treasury is gambling that the recovery does not explode into a Lawson-style boom.

Ministers believe that the safety-first approach is the key to a feel-good factor among voters that will rescue their hopes of a victory against the odds next spring — before rising inflation and a likely Treasury borrowing crisis engulfs whichever party wins the election.

But as Mr Clarke repeated his Budget boast that the average family is more than £1,000 better off now than in 1991-92, an investigation by Coopers & Lybrand showed the average worker has lost £630 over the past five years.

The study showed that new taxes, and increases in indirect levies, have more than wiped out gains from the 2p reduction in the base rate of income tax over two years.

All the self-employed and employees examined in the analysis are worse off now than they were five years ago. Only a handful of pensioners have gained.

With the Opposition also warning voters that they face an average £200 increase in council tax bills because of Treasury cuts, Mr Clarke battled to hold the line.

Although direct taxation has gone down, there has been a massive increase in indirect taxation, a range of new taxes and cuts in tax reliefs. Value added tax of 8 per cent on gas and electricity, and the reduction of tax relief on mortgage interest repayments have eaten into the gains from income tax cuts.

Since the Budget, the Chancellor has come under strong pressure from top companies to halt the rise in the pound. All three of the leading employers' organisations are reporting mounting concern among members at the loss of competitiveness caused by the surge in sterling.

The Chancellor used his Budget speech to stress that he had been tough on tax to keep the heat off interest rates and so prevent an even bigger rise in the pound.

However, there are fears that Mr Clarke may cave in to Bank of England demands for higher rates to choke off the inflation prompted by strong consumer demand.

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Mr Micawber's triumph

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

MR CLARKE offered a triumphalist Budget, though perhaps he should have arranged a few triumphs first. None the less there was a cocky swagger to him as he bellied up to the despatch box.

At one point he reminded us of his Nottingham origins, and I realised who we were watching: Albert Finney in Saturday Night And Sunday Morning, out in the late 1950s, wearing his sharp new Hush Puppies, a packet of cigarillos in his pocket, downing the first tax-reduced pint of the night.

The successes are, of course, a little threadbare. The best he could manage was that this year's borrowing requirement was down to a mere £26 billion, hardly more than a grand for every household.

The Chancellor is the Mr Micawber of the deficit economy. "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure, twenty-six billion and twenty pounds, result happiness!"

He even looked like Mr Micawber, rubicund and cheerful, spraying bad jokes around like a jolly uncle. It is inconceivable that he was tipsy, but he had the relaxed bonhomie of someone who plans to be soon. The new measures against tax evasion would not, he assured us, bring about "mo' bureauc' or re' tape . . . the first du' o' Gummt is to ma' sure . . ."

A new parliamentary figure appeared in his speech, Ms Debbie Speager. She may be related to Mr Deputy Speaker. Now and again he paused to laugh, for some reason best known to himself.

He began with a few lacklustre scripted jokes ("contrary to popular belief, I usually look in the Mirror in the morning,") then moved on to his business of the day — taunting Gordon Brown. He said that few serious commentators doubted that growth would be lower than 3.5 per cent next year.

"I hear mutterings from the shadow chancellor — I said, few *serious* commentators . . ."

There were loud Tory cheers and jeers, but Mr Brown looked furious. He pulled in his cheeks as if sucking on an acid drop, a sulphuric acid drop.

Mr Clarke's cunning was, perhaps, to make us think this was a cautious Budget for the Tories to build on next year, when in fact it was a spending spree for Labour to pick up the bills.

Portillo strikes £2bn arms sales deal in Gulf

David Fairhall

THE Government is preparing to commit British troops to the defence of the United Arab Emirates in return for potential arms contracts worth billions of pounds.

The Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, signed a defence co-operation agreement with the UAE in Abu Dhabi last week providing a framework for military support and the supply of modern equipment.

Diplomatically, the agreement is acutely sensitive, because the UAE is notoriously coy about its arms deals and because the small print includes highly contentious paragraphs on the legal status of any British troops that might be deployed there.

Earlier in the negotiations, Mr Portillo said bluntly that he was unwilling to put British troops under Arab jurisdiction, in the way the French had allegedly agreed to do.

But a delicate compromise has apparently been reached, leaving the soldiers under British military jurisdiction while on duty but making them subject to certain local laws when off duty.

The agreement provides for joint military planning so that British rapid reaction forces could go to the Gulf Arabs' assistance, but it stops well short of an automatic guarantee.

The agreement opens up the possibility of huge arms deals. Industrial sources estimate the potential to be more than £2 billion. The UAE's shopping list is believed to include: fast patrol boats and corvettes, for which the Southampton shipbuilders Vosper Thornycroft are strong contenders; British Aerospace Hawk trainer aircraft to supplement the squadron already operated by the emirates; and tactical cruise missiles.

● *Britain's £200 million overseas aid* programme to Indonesia was attacked last week for being linked directly to multi-million pound sales of arms and military aircraft.

A National Audit Office report found that two projects were granted British aid after the Foreign Office said they should go ahead to help secure future arms contracts.

The report says a police training fund was approved because "the close association between the Indonesian police force and the military establishment was felt by the Foreign Office to play a crucial role on future decisions by Indonesia on military procurement".

Approval for re-building radio stations followed a warning that it "could have an effect on potential defence and commercial sales".

Noises off . . . A total of 2,740 young musicians squeezed into Birmingham Symphony Hall last week to form the world's largest orchestra. A place in the record books rests on confirmation that they played for the required five minutes PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID JONES

Plutonium leak 'secret'

Paul Brown

DAMAGES of £6 million were awarded last week against the Ministry of Defence for causing radioactive contamination of an industrial estate next to its nuclear weapons plant at Aldermaston, in Berkshire.

Blue Circle Industries had sued the ministry because it said a £10 million deal to sell the estate collapsed when the purchaser found it had been contaminated with plutonium.

Although the extent of the contamination had been known for two years before it was disclosed to Blue Circle, it was not until the sale was almost complete that the ministry sanctioned disclosure.

Mr Justice Carnwath, giving judgment, said Clive Merredew, an executive of Sun Micro-systems, a US company which was to buy the site, was shocked the contamination had been disclosed so late. "It destroyed his confidence in the Atomic Weapons Establishment's management. They had allowed three years to go by without telling Blue Circle . . . He did not feel that Sun could require its staff to move to a site with plutonium contamination."

Subsequently 1,000 cubic metres of soil were removed at a cost of £350,000, and Blue Circle's own office workers now occupy the site.

Contamination was caused when 5½ in of rain fell in a freak storm in July 1989. The AWE staff checked the area shortly after the storm and discovered the contamination had spilled on to the industrial estate, but did not tell the owners.

Kurd freed by Euro Court

A KURDISH man who had been imprisoned for two years without trial because he was deemed to be a threat to national security, was last week celebrating his freedom following a government defeat in the European Court of Human Rights, *writes Owen Bowcott.*

The decision to release Sezai Ucar, aged 27, was taken by Home Office lawyers assessing the implications of a Strasbourg judgment last month.

Other detainees may be released in the coming days. Mr Ucar has been given "exceptional leave to stay" in Britain.

The test case concerned Karamjit Singh Chahal who had spent six years and three months in Bedford jail while the Government tried to deport him on the grounds that he was a threat to national security.

Ministers alleged he was a Sikh separatist terrorist who had conspired to carry out attacks in the Punjab. Mr Chahal denied involvement and was never charged with a criminal offence.

He was released after the court ruled that he had been deprived of his legal rights and that his life would be in danger if he was returned to India.

Mr Ucar, who was also held for "other reasons of a political nature", faced deportation on the grounds that his "presence was not conducive to the public good" — the normal term for those alleged to be involved in terrorism.

Mr Ucar was allegedly involved in the ERNK, the political wing of the Kurdish separatist PKK movement. He had been in Rochester prison, Kent, for two years but had never faced criminal charges.

Euro talks a success, Chancellor insists

John Palmer in Brussels and Michael White

THE Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, emerged on Monday from a 12-hour meeting of European Union finance ministers in Brussels triumphantly claiming he had secured "copper-bottomed" guarantees that Britain would not be subject to hefty fines while it stayed outside the proposed European single currency.

Although his statement was broadly welcomed by Tory Eurosceptics, they insisted on seeing the small print before accepting that the Chancellor had fulfilled their demands that the proposed stability pact would not affect Britain — even if it stays outside the euro.

Tory rightwingers are still demanding that John Major rules out the prospect of British membership of the single currency in the lifetime of the next parliament. Mr Clarke has repeatedly hinted that he would prefer to resign rather than make further concessions.

To underpin his assertion that it would be "quite preposterous" to reverse the Cabinet's policy of keeping options open, Mr Clarke declared: "I said I would get copper-bottomed wording in order to make it clear what in my opinion was always the case, that these EMU regulations did not apply to the UK. I got it this morning. I have to say without any particular difficulty."

EU finance ministers hope to put a deal on the table at next week's Dublin summit whereby countries with excess deficits (above 3 per cent of GDP) face escalating fines unless gripped by severe depression. They will meet on the eve of the summit. The key remaining issue is whether a slump is rigidly defined as a dip of 2 per cent of output, the German view, or more flexibly as France and Britain prefer.

Mr Clarke's former Treasury colleague, David Heathcoat-Amory, later said, "So far, so good", and fellow sceptics claimed that Mr Clarke's cautious behaviour amounted to a victory for their latest campaign. But Westminster was swirling with rumour — officially denied by Downing Street — that Mr Major is again edging towards an emphatic "no" to the euro, which sceptics believe would be a vote-winner.

Government whips dismissed the new campaign as media-inspired. Most cabinet ministers are said to back a change, but the formidable Mr Clarke would almost certainly resign rather than accept a messy retreat. Even a last-minute switch in the Tory manifesto to outflank Labour, hinted at on Monday night, might trigger his departure.

"The idea of changing [policy] is quite preposterous in my view," Mr Clarke said in Brussels. "It would be no way to fight an election nor to present yourself to the country as a governing party at all.

"We should exercise our choice whether or not we wish to join the single currency when we discover whether the single currency is going ahead, and when we discover who is going to join it, and when we discover what the detailed terms are."

Killer food bug strikes

Erlend Clouston

HEALTH officials admitted this week that more people may become infected with the deadly *Escherichia coli* bacterium because of the delay in identifying suspect outlets in the outbreak of food poisoning which has so far killed five elderly men and women and may have infected a further 280, of which 148 are confirmed.

North Lanarkshire council confirmed that the virulent *E coli* 0157 bacterium had been detected in gravy supplied to the lunch club where the outbreak started by John Barr and Son, the upmarket Wishaw butchers presumed to have been the source of the infection.

The Scottish Secretary Michael Forsyth, announced an inquiry into the outbreak, to be led by Professor Hugh Pennington of Aberdeen university. But Labour has criticised the handling of the emergency, which has put 50 people, including three children, in hospital. Sixteen patients in Monklands hospital, Airdrie, are giving cause for concern, while a woman at Glasgow Royal Infirmary remains on the critical but stable list.

Labour complaints centred on the delays in naming the ever-increasing number of central Scotland businesses which had received cold meat or pies from John Barr and Son.

The reluctance to advertise possible sources of contamination has led to charges that officials put commercial interests before their duty to the public. Barr's products are unlabelled, and a customer of one of the 67 implicated businesses may have bought and stored a contaminated item before they were cleared from the shelves.

Officials attributed the delay to government guidelines, problems in gaining accurate information, and a reluctance to blame the current Scottish Butcher of the Year without firm evidence. Although the lunch club and 10 of the initial suspected victims had patronised his double-fronted Wishaw shop, it serves up to 80 per cent of the town; officials say they wanted to make sure they were not pursuing a coincidence.

Scotland records 250 cases of *E coli* infection annually, the highest rate in Europe, for reasons which no one can explain.



Pensioners outside the closed butcher's shop of John Barr and Son PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MacLEOD

Disease fear hits campus

Geoffrey Gibbs

TWO STUDENTS from a University of Wales hall of residence died from meningitis last week.

Hundreds of students queued sombrely for vaccinations at the weekend after the deaths of Ann-Marie O'Connor and Samantha Milroy. Three other students from the same residential buildings are being treated in hospital after being taken ill with the disease. Two are said to be making good progress but the third, a 20-year-old male student, is still in intensive care.

Dot Hodge, president of the students' union, said the deaths had traumatised fellow students. "Most students of this age are just not accustomed to dealing with this sort of grief."

Telephone hotlines have been swamped with calls from worried parents and students, and normal student social life on the campus has ground to a halt.

After the first death, Bill Smith, director of public health for the local health authority, called for the cancellation of parties, saying intimate contact, especially the transfer of saliva, could spread the disease.

Health officials admitted to being puzzled because the five students were not part of a close circle of friends. Experts in communicable diseases believe they were all affected by a Group C meningococcal strain of the disease, which can kill within hours.

University Hall has been the site of previous cases of meningitis. In October a 20-year-old woman student believed to be staying at the hall was taken ill with the disease. This time last year another student at the hall was diagnosed as suffering from meningococcal septicaemia. Both made a full recovery.

Leftwing MPs face rap

Rebecca Smithers

THREE Labour MPs could be the first members of the parliamentary party to be disciplined under a tough new party code, after backing a campaign organised by the Socialist Workers Party which is strongly critical of Tony Blair.

The three MPs, Alan Simpson, Jeremy Corbyn and Eddie Loyden — all members of the leftwing Campaign group — have put their names to a mass petition being published this week in protest at the Labour leader's plans to weaken the party's commitment to socialism and its link with the trade unions.

Organised by the Trotskyite SWP and already backed by 15,000 members of the Labour party, trade unionists and other socialists, the petition is described as "the single biggest revolt against the direction in which New Labour is moving since Tony Blair became leader".

It was due to be published in a series of advertisements this week, with a call to activists in the Labour movement to add their names to the statement.

The new code proposes tough new rules of conduct for MPs, who are required "to do nothing to bring the party into disrepute". The code is due to come into force next month.

Mr Corbyn, MP for Islington North, confirmed that he had signed a petition during the Labour party conference but questioned whether it was organised by the SWP.

Mr Simpson, Labour MP for Nottingham South, is understood to have written to the SWP saying that signing the petition did not mean he supported the group.

But the latest backlash is an embarrassment to Labour, already facing a challenge from the far left in December 12's Barnsley East by-election. Former Yorkshire miners' leader Ken Capstick is fighting the seat on behalf of the Socialist Labour Party.

In Brief

THE VETERAN ex-minister Sir Nicholas Scott finally lost his battle to stay on as a Tory MP when a meeting of almost 1,000 party members in Kensington and Chelsea voted to reject him.

A PIONEERING operation to restore sight by using a tooth to make a framework to hold a miniature eye glass has been performed in Britain for the first time.

THE Police Bill going through Parliament overturns established common law principles of personal freedom and is certain to be challenged in the European Court of Human Rights, according to senior lawyers.

COMPENSATION amounting to £500,000 was won by families devastated by the children's nurse Beverley Allitt, who killed four children and injured nine others. The "moral justice" agreement goes well beyond legal obligations and could extend compensation rights.

THREE shooting clubs near Dunblane — including one used by the mass murderer Thomas Hamilton — have been expelled by the local sports council.

A DRIVER bled to death in front of his girlfriend after being stabbed to death in a frenzied attack of road rage.

POLICE seized £2.5 million worth of cannabis during a raid at a farm in Co Durham, in what is believed to be the largest seizure of its kind in Britain.

A YOUNG man who shot dead his common-law wife in a car park had been granted bail by magistrates on a domestic violence offence despite police fears for his wife's safety.

A SADISTIC homosexual who killed for fun was sentenced to life after being found guilty last year of stabbing to death four men, three of them gay.

VASECTOMIES on the NHS have been virtually ruled out by West Surrey health authority in its efforts to make savings.

CHRISTOPHER CLEARY, a stalker with an 18-year record of sex attacks, was jailed for eight years after indecently assaulting three women.

BRITAIN'S richest pimp, Carlos Pires, who forced penniless Brazilian women into seven-day-a-week "sex slavery", was ordered to hand over his fortune of £725,617, or have three years added to his sentence.

IDRIES SHAH, Sufi thinker and writer for a late 20th century audience, has died aged 72.

Schools on alert as former pupils sue

John Carvel and Clare Dyer

LOCAL authority insurance companies this week promised vigorous resistance in the courts to litigation by two teenagers who are trying to make legal history by suing their former schools after failing to get good enough exam results.

Zurich Municipal, the largest local government insurer, said it had a duty to policy-holders to avoid out-of-court settlements which might encourage a rash of speculative claims by disgruntled students.

The educational establishment was shocked by the disclosure that two 17-year-olds have secured legal aid to sue the governors of schools criticised by the inspectorate for "failing to provide a satisfactory education".

Graham Lane, education chairman at the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, said the action was outrageous. "You cannot run society like this. This must be fought properly. We cannot have another out-of-court settlement like the one conceded recently by the London Borough of Richmond, which paid £30,000 to a 20-year-old claiming compensation for bullying at school."

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said the case opened a frightening prospect. "The costs might be met by public liability insurance, but that would lead to higher premiums, which could have a devastating effect on schools' ability to provide education for every child."

Jack Rabinowicz, solicitor for the 17-year-olds, said it was unlikely the case would open the floodgates. He did not name his clients or their schools — two out of more than 200 classed as failing by the Office for Standards in Education.

The girl left school two years ago without GCSEs and the boy got much worse grades than expected. Both say they had reasonable school reports and had been expected to do well. They are studying at sixth form colleges and are suing for the cost of tuition and maintenance, as well as loss of earnings from delayed entry into the job market.

Mr Rabinowicz said young people were entitled to compensation in cases where the school was officially labelled as failing its pupils and when it could be shown that they should have done better. "If you have a Hackney Downs situation and kids lose out, shouldn't you have a right to compensation?"

Last year the Government closed Hackney Downs, an east London comprehensive, after a team of experts decided its standards had declined beyond rescue.

The Department of Education said the case was a matter for the schools and individuals concerned. But David Blunkett, the shadow education secretary, said he was against the US approach to litigation which led to allocating blame for problems instead of solving them.

The case is one of dozens of pending "educational negligence" suits being brought by ex-pupils against schools and local education authorities they claim let them down and ruined their prospects.

In a test case on expulsions, a 25-year-old who was asked to leave school at the age of six because he was "too difficult to teach" is claiming compensation for having his education ruined.

The flood has been unleashed by a House of Lords ruling in June 1995, which laid down that schools owe a duty of care to pupils.

Booked in . . . It took just 44 years of planning, 12 years of building work and £511 million to get the first book three quarters of a mile from the British Museum to the British Library's new home in Euston Road, central London this week. The library opens to the public next November

Goldsmith agrees words

Ewen MacAskill

THE long-awaited wording of the referendum question multi-millionaire Sir James Goldsmith has been campaigning for was finally disclosed last week in a speech at Oxford university.

Sir James, who established the Referendum Party to force the main parties to pledge a referendum on Europe, has been ridiculed for not revealing the question.

He told students the wording should be: "Do you want the United Kingdom to be part of a Federal Europe?"; or "Do you want the UK to return to an association of sovereign nations that are part of a common trading market?"

A Conservative Central Office spokesman said the question added to the confusion and was two questions rather than one. The Conservatives and Labour have promised a referendum on a single currency but not on the wider question of the nature of the European Union. Sir James is threatening to put up candidates against all MPs unsympathetic to its proposed referendum.

The Referendum Party later elaborated on the question, saying the precise wording should be established by Parliament. It added: "By a 'Federal Europe' it is meant a European Union with supranational political institutions, including the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, and in which every nation must apply European law and which would bring about economic and monetary union."

BBC concedes Murdoch will control digital TV

Andrew Culf

THE BBC conceded last week that it was powerless to prevent Rupert Murdoch from controlling the digital TV revolution and dominating British broadcasting into the next century.

Sir Christopher Bland, the BBC's chairman, effectively threw in the towel in the corporation's attempts to get equal access to the new technology, leaving BSkyB in a near-monopoly position.

Sir Christopher said BSkyB's victory was a *fait accompli* and there was little prospect of getting the Government to revise its draft regulations. But he insisted the BBC would continue to fiercely argue the dangers of abuse posed by Mr Murdoch's stranglehold over the digital gateway right up until the final deadline later this month.

Some corporation executives remained hopeful the Commons would overturn the regulations.

Sir Christopher claimed the new rules "fall well short of what is required to ensure fair competition". The Government announced it would be left to Don Cruickshank, director general of Oftel, to ensure access on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory terms.

Sir Christopher revealed that the BBC had begun negotiations with BSkyB over getting its services on digital satellite.

Mainstream broadcasters fear Mr Murdoch will control the gateway to the new technology when he launches up to 200 digital satellite channels next year.

BSkyB has an effective monopoly of the set-top box decoders required to receive digital transmissions and would be able to bar access to rival broadcasters. It also controls the subscription management technology and the electronic programme guides needed to navigate viewers through the multi-channel world.

The BBC has argued for set-top boxes to contain a common interface for all broadcasters. Sir Christopher said the BBC had been unable to develop its own boxes because it cannot spend licence income on risk ventures.

The Department of Trade and Industry insists Mr Murdoch should be rewarded for his risk-taking.

Sir Christopher said: "In the United States you would not be allowed to own the digital satellite technology when you are a substantial provider of programmes."

● BBC insiders fear the corporation is letting commercial interests influence its coverage of China. Critics claim several stories about the occupation of Tibet and on human rights abuses have not been broadcast, although the BBC expressed initial interest or commissioned them. Its trade links with China are currently at an all-time high.

But the BBC dismissed as "totally false" suggestions it had dropped news stories about China. Bob Phillis, chief executive of BBC Worldwide, said: "It is simply untrue to suggest there has been, or ever would be, pressure placed on BBC journalists to distort or soft peddle stories in order to cater for BBC commercial interests."

The Asian dragon stirs

ASIA IS on the move, and not just in the much-hyped sense of its famous "economic miracle". In the week after the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) conference, the Chinese president Jiang Zemin has begun a tour of the subcontinent; South Korea has renewed its disagreement with the United States over how to handle the North; Japan may be edging towards a possible deal with Russia on the Northern Territories; and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has vigorously slapped down European unease over human rights in Indonesia and Burma. There is no obvious pattern but new limits are being tested and new alignments being explored. While everyone invokes the 21st century as the age of Asian concord, there is also the suspicion that this will be a hard task. Economic dynamism cannot efface the tensions caused by unsolved questions from the past and uncertain relationships for the future.

Mr Jiang's visit to India and Pakistan embodies a historical paradox. The natural entente should be between Beijing and New Delhi rather than between Beijing and Islamabad — indeed it started that way while Pakistan aligned itself with the West. But the Sino-Indian border dispute and Soviet support for India prompted a tilt that has been maintained. Mr Jiang and Prime Minister Deve Gowda may have begun to sketch out the shape of a new relationship, which seeks common ground between Asia's largest powers while shelving the border question. Such a relationship would be in everyone's interests. But the nuclear question is harder to banish than the territorial one: significantly it was not discussed directly between Mr Jiang and Mr Deve Gowda. Indian strategists, particularly on the right, regard China's nuclear status as the greatest threat, while China continues to provide ambiguous military support with a nuclear potential to Pakistan. So long as India and Pakistan fail to address seriously their own tensions (particularly over Kashmir) it may provide an irresistible temptation for Beijing to exploit.

Power relationships at the other end of Asia are also in a fluid state. Russia has become a factor again: first China and now Japan are looking more carefully at relations with Moscow. Mr Jiang will visit there next year. Tokyo was reported at the weekend to be planning to open a consulate office in Soviet-controlled southern Sakhalin — in spite of its claim to sovereignty. Japan's wider ambitions remain a source of considerable suspicion, not least in Beijing, in spite of Tokyo's careful preference for understatement. The divided Korean peninsula is the joker in the East Asian pack. It is hard enough to handle a potentially disintegrating North Korea without South Korea's reversion to hardline tactics. A compromise was reached between Presidents Kim Young-sam and Bill Clinton at Apec — by which Seoul would no longer make an apology from Pyongyang (for its submarine incursion) the precondition for new talks. Within days, Mr Kim was telling his party that he had agreed to no such thing. East Asia has the potential to become a constellation of balancing interests: China, Russia, Japan, the US and a unified Korea. How to get there is another matter.

The Apec drive for free and open trade and investment cannot be seen as presenting a solution to the region's other problems. The US, with a century of advocacy for the "open door" in Asia, is prone to regard economic liberalisation as the catch-all answer. But the Apec conference underlined the wide divergence between those members who seek binding commitments, and those with mixed feelings about globalisation who would prefer a looser arrangement. It was evident too that much of Apec's value lay in the opportunity it provided for bilateral talks on the political and security issues. Throughout the region, there is a lack of multilateral mechanisms for discussion of these issues — apart from the tentative Regional Forum of Asean. Yet the future shape of post-cold war (though with two countries still divided) Asia is not any clearer than that of Europe: it requires just as much hard thinking.

An economically cynical Budget

KENNETH CLARKE'S fourth Budget is a politically shrewd but economically dubious attempt to play Scrooge and Santa Claus at the same time. It showers the populace with pre-electoral popcorn (except for peripheralised groups like single parents, who lose their allowances, and payers of "sin" taxes on alcohol and petrol) while pretending to be doing the best thing for the economy. He is doing nothing of the sort. The last thing this economy needs — when consumer spending is already rising at over 4 per cent a year even before tax cuts and the building society windfalls — is fresh cuts in income taxes and allowances worth £3.3 billion a year. It's like trying to put out a smouldering fire by pouring petrol — albeit unleaded — on it. It is true, as the Treasury will argue, that the revenue side of the Budget is broadly neutral — with lower income taxes offset by higher indirect taxes including the effects of earlier Budget decisions on the tax base — but that doesn't justify income tax cuts. The experience of recent very serious overruns on the public sector borrowing requirement (this year's is £4 billion adrift of last year's estimate even after the recent improvement) should have made the Chancellor err on the side of caution. And if there is money available then there are plenty of infrustructural projects which ought to have had priority.

Mr Clarke had £5 million worth of good news for the BBC World Service's language broadcasts — but on another front of Britain's global effort there was fury that help for the neediest countries has again been slashed. A cut of £180 million to the Overseas Development Administration's budget is devastating to charities which take no comfort from knowing that this is part of a wider trend, with development aid by the richest countries at its lowest level for 20 years. Over two years, Britain's aid budget has been reduced by 12.5 per cent.

The moral case for aid is as valid as ever, and the economic and political arguments have gained ground as the new uncertainties of the post-cold war era have become permanent: well-targeted assistance can reduce the risk of a crisis which then demands millions in emergency relief.

Until last week Mr Clarke had been a surprisingly prudent and rightly praised Chancellor who was determined to restore the Conservatives' reputation for economic competence after the excesses of previous incumbents. Now he is risking that reputation by trying to have it both ways. During his speech he gave the impression that huge favours worth hundreds and hundreds of millions were being bestowed on the national health service, where spending is set to grow by 3 per cent in real terms (after inflation), yet when the Budget Red Book was published it showed that spending on health in real terms (after allowing for inflation) is virtually frozen for the next two years and will decline slightly the following year. Curious that. Yet health is something that people would happily spend more of their income on. Large sums were also promised for education but, since council spending in general is being squeezed, local authorities strapped for cash will either have to raid their education budgets for other priorities or raise the council tax.

The most worrying part of the Budget is the economic judgment itself. Mr Clarke is unashamedly going for broke with a pre-electoral consumer boom. Consumer spending is forecast to rise by 4.25 per cent. Living standards (as measured by real personal disposable income) are already rising by more than 4 per cent when the economy (at the last count) was expanding at only 2.4 per cent. It doesn't take a degree in maths to see what Mr Clarke is really up to. The Treasury says that business investment will rise by 10 per cent next year. We pray it is right — though figures released last week show that total gross capital formation in the economy is contracting by 2.2 per cent despite the 2.4 per cent expansion of gross domestic product. The Budget forecasts state that manufacturing output — almost stagnant in underlying terms for decades — will rise from 0.25 per cent this year to 3 per cent next year, and that export volume will rise by 5.75 per cent in 1997. Yet since August the pound has soared by 10 per cent against other currencies. It looks likely that in the run-up to the election Britain will be thrust into a pre-electoral boom driven not by investment and exports but by consumer spending.

The Chancellor should have tightened his fiscal stance and brought sterling down by intervention on the foreign exchanges and other means instead of raising interest rates, which could push the pound up further. Behind the superficial prudence of the Budget is a cynical attempt to use the economy to win the election with scant regard for the consequences.

Aids, an epidemic in search of a vaccine

Peter Piot

THERE is a growing optimism about new treatments for Aids, with recent headlines foretelling the day "when Aids ends". But Aids is not over; on the contrary, in all likelihood, the darkest days of the epidemic lie ahead of us.

That's because the disease continues to spread at an alarming rate, difficult questions remain about the long-term effectiveness of the new combination therapies, and for the vast majority of people with HIV/Aids access to these new treatments is not even a dream.

The fact is that 90 per cent of the 22.6 million people living with HIV/Aids today are in developing countries — many with no access to aspirin, much less anti-retrovirals. Worldwide, 8,500 people a day contract HIV — 1,000 of them children. And Aids is no longer a disease only affecting men — 50 per cent of all new HIV infections occur among women.

As the 9th World Aids Day was celebrated last Sunday, many would argue that, globally, it is only the beginning of the epidemic. My organisation UNAids (the joint United Nations programme on HIV/Aids) issued a report, HIV/Aids: The Global Epidemic. Its data reveal that the disease is spreading fast, entering entirely new regions, and strengthening its grip on areas already hardest hit.

Infection rates are skyrocketing in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union — regions seriously handicapped in their ability to respond to public health disasters. In one city in the Ukraine the percentage of HIV-infected intravenous-drug users jumped from 1.7 per cent to 56.5 per cent in just 11 months. And sexually transmitted disease rates are rising dramatically among the republics of the former Soviet Union, indicating a rise in unsafe sex — in just one year the incidence of syphilis more than doubled in Russia and quadrupled in Kazakhstan.

New HIV epidemics are also emerging in Asia. The Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine estimates a 10-fold increase in HIV infection between 1993 and 1995. In Vietnam, HIV rates among sex workers have quadrupled in recent years. And in Cambodia, HIV prevalence among blood donors in Phnom Penh rose from 0.1 per cent to 10 per cent in four years.

In Africa, where the epidemic rages on, civil strife and mass migrations threaten to expand HIV infection rates. And countries like India continue to see exponential increases in HIV infection, while the response by public officials lags far behind.

Aids has also established a strong foothold among women and children. While recent data show mother-to-child transmission, preventable with treatment, dropping in the United States, this is not the case globally, where 400,000 children contracted HIV this year alone.

And thousands of children will live with another kind of Aids tragedy: as more and more mothers die of Aids, more and more orphans will live with the aftermath. From a global vantage point, declarations of the end of Aids are not just premature, they are dangerous. There is a danger that decision-makers in the developed world — who control and provide much of the funding for Aids treatment and research — will become complacent and cut funds for desperately needed research and prevention programmes.

There is a danger that those who have adopted safer sex practices over the past 15 years will abandon them, thinking the epidemic is over, or that at least the disease is manageable. Manageable, perhaps, if 26 expensive pills a day is manageable.

There is also a danger that these widely heralded new treatments will, in the long run, fail to halt HIV. The truth is that we have no long-term data on the effectiveness of the new combination therapies, and, until we do, it is important to temper our optimism with a healthy dose of scepticism and caution.

With many countries lacking the means to fight the epidemic, it is critical that we put the bulk of our resources where they will do the greatest good. And that is in prevention: education efforts, new forms of protection, and the development of a vaccine.

Where governments have tackled the epidemic head-on with aggressive prevention campaigns to populations at risk — from Thailand and Brazil to Uganda and even Pakistan — we are seeing success. Social marketing of condoms has resulted in increased use, first sexual intercourse is being postponed, men are having sex with fewer partners and fewer prostitutes, and increased treatment of sexually transmitted diseases is leading to lower HIV infection rates. In each case, broad societal involvement and commitment, resulting in an expanding response to the epidemic, have been crucial for success. In the industrialised world, the message about safer sex has spread far and wide, and helped stabilise or even lower infection rates in some countries.

BUT JUST as we know that new drug treatments are too expensive to become available in the near future to most people with HIV — costing as much as 2,000 times the annual public per capita expenditure on health in some developing countries — mass education programmes will never be enough to eradicate HIV from the planet. We need a vaccine. New research is giving us a better understanding of how individuals become infected, and why some do not. We now need to apply this knowledge to the development of new candidate vaccines and to test them in clinical trials as rapidly as possible.

Today, however, only 1 per cent of all Aids research spending goes to vaccine research. The challenge is for the research community, governments, non-governmental organisations and drugs companies to focus efforts to make Aids vaccine research and testing an international public health priority.

Now more than ever before there is real hope of one day controlling the Aids epidemic. Accomplishing this, however, will require a new commitment of resources and will by citizens, concerned organisations and governments throughout the world.

Dr Peter Piot is the Executive Director of UNAids, Geneva

Le Monde

Zaire shows signs of falling apart

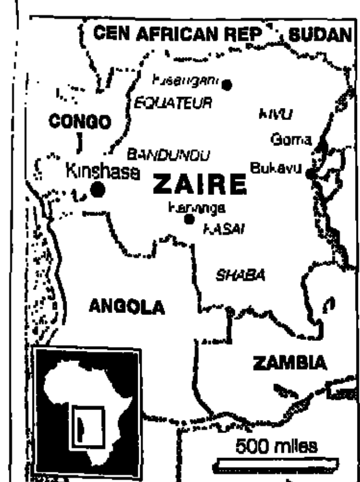
Frédéric Fritscher in Kinshasa

FOR WEEKS, wild rumours had been circulating in the Zairean capital that a small group of generals was preparing to seize power. The day was to have been the 31st anniversary of Mobutu Sese Seko's presidency: November 24.

The occasion was duly celebrated, but no coup took place. At a short ceremony at the Palais du Peuple on November 25, Baudoin Banza Mulalay, vice-chairman of the People's Movement of the Revolution (MPR), formerly the only party in the country, said that the party supported the government of the prime minister, Léon Kengo Wa Dondo.

Mobuto's long absence, combined with military defeat and the increasing popularity of the rebellion in the eastern province of Kivu, is again causing unease. The rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, sprang out of nowhere after the rebel Tutsi Banyamulenge captured Bukavu and Goma, the capitals of southern and northern Kivu respectively, and seized a broad strip of Zairean territory along the Burundian, Rwandan and Ugandan borders.

Kabila is now establishing his authority. Presiding over the Democratic Alliance for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre, he has appointed new governors and mayors in an attempt to set up an alternative administration in the "liberated territories".



Kabila's chief of staff, Major André-Kisase Ngandu, believes the fighting in eastern Zaire will soon be over. The two leaders say they are not trying to chip Kivu away from Zaire but aim to seize power in Kinshasa.

However, the uprising in Katanga in 1960 is still fresh in people's minds. It has sustained centres of rebellious activity in southern Kivu and northern Katanga (now Shaba) near Kalemie on Lake Tanganyika, a region close to Moba and Vyura where the Banyavyura (Zairean Tutsis of the same origin as the Banyamulenge) are established.

Major Ngandu is a Muluba, a native of the Kasai district, like Etienne Tshisekedi, the leader of the radical opposition to Mobutu.

Kinshasa is haunted by the spectre of yet another separatist uprising in Shaba. The fears are all the stronger as powerful separatist tendencies are appearing in eastern and western Kasai, both diamond-rich provinces and the power base of Tshisekedi and his Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS). Kasai and Shaba, with their vast mining resources, are more inclined to look to southern Africa, in particular South Africa, than to Central Africa and the rest of the continent.

These three big regions — Kivu, Shaba and Kasai — constitute the "useful" part of Zaire. Kivu, considered the country's granary, is said to have huge reserves of natural gas and oil. Diamonds constitute Kasai's wealth, and Shaba's soil is rich in copper, cobalt, manganese and uranium. The northeast of Upper Zaire is believed to have gold, diamonds and oil.

This economic divide is compounded by an east-west split along a line running between Kisangani and Kananga. Communities living west of it speak Lingala, to the east are Swahili speakers. The former live in the provinces of Equateur, Bandundu, Lower Zaire and Kinshasa. The latter are to be found in the Upper Zaire, Kivu, Shaba and Kasai: regions apt to buck the central government's authority. With the exception of eastern Kasai, they also have borders with other countries where separatist and rebel movements are developing.

Soldiers and local people at a rally in Bukavu, Eastern Zaire last month listen intently to Laurent Kabila, leader of the rebel Tutsi Banyamulenge forces

KABILA and Ngandu have received more than just support from Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda for their assault on Kivu. To the west, Angola, fed up with Mobutu's unconditional support for the Unita leader, Jonas Savimbi, is maintaining troops of the rebel "Katanga gendarmes" along its borders with Lower Zaire and western Kasai.

Jacques Matanda Ma Mboyo, a Zairean who sat on the National Conference — which consisted of 2,850 delegates appointed by Mobutu in August 1991 to consider the country's political future, and which wound up in December 1992 — is in a position to play a similar role to Kabila.

Matanda went into exile in Angola in 1994 and frequently visits Uganda, where Major Pica, a former military man from Lower Zaire, is living. Tshisekedi supporters see in Pica, who took part in an abortive coup in 1977, a "real strategist". Matanda is said to be in a position to launch attacks from bases in Angola and Uganda.

All these men are close to the UDPS and Tshisekedi, who they want to see restored to the post of prime minister to which he was elected by the National Conference. The opening of a front in Kivu should, according to some observers, be followed by a similar movement in Shaba, along with an attempt to destabilise Kinshasa.

The former mayor of Kinshasa, Nkoy Mafuta, says that the Zairean capital "came within a hair's breadth of an uprising". The government believes the danger is now over. Mobutu and his closest associates have reaffirmed their support for the prime minister.

Tshisekedi, sharply rebuked for his bid to become prime minister again and for his declarations that it is necessary to seek a rapprochement with Kabila, is likely to come away empty-handed from Kinshasa. This should make it easier for Mobutu to return to the country.

(November 27)

Agents seize general for speaking out

Nicole Bonnet in Lima

RETIRED General Rodolfo Robles, who for the past three years has been speaking out against the activities of a death squad that he claims is operating from "within the government", was seized by Peruvian secret service (SIN) agents outside his home in the capital, Lima, on November 27.

"About 10 men jumped out of two light trucks and ran towards him," said a witness. "As he shouted: 'Tell them, it's the SIN', the men in civilian clothes hit and overpowered him by spraying him with a paralysing gas."

Shortly afterwards, the Supreme Council of Military Justice, a special court, announced that the general had been charged with "dishonouring the armed forces, disobedience and insulting a superior, and lying".

The general had earlier declared that the SIN was behind two bomb attacks against a radio station and a television station in Puno, in the southeast. "I have proof," he said, "and I'm ready to show it to the judicial authorities or a congressional inquiry." He identified one of the three men who committed the terrorist act as a non-commissioned officer and member of the powerful Colina group.

The existence of this group was first revealed by Gen Robles in 1993. It abruptly ended his brilliant military career at the age of 37 and forced him into exile. The general accuses group members of carrying out — among others — the La Cantuta massacre (the mutilated and charred bodies of nine students and a young professor kidnapped in July 1992 were found in communal graves a year later) and the Barrios Altos killings (a score of ice-cream vendors, suspected of belonging to the Maoist Shining Path rebel movement, were shot dead in November 1991).

Gen Robles returned to Peru in June 1995, on the day a law came into force granting an amnesty to officers of the security forces for their actions during the 15 years of the "dirty war". Shortly afterwards, he became one of the leaders of the civil rights movement campaigning against the impunity granted to these men.

The Puno attack on the only television station that dares to speak out against the government, TV3, was seen by the opposition as a move to intimidate the independent press.

"The Colina National Liberation Commando is very much alive . . ." was General Robless comment at the time. "Its job is to liquidate the opponents of this pseudo-democratic regime. State terrorism will go on flourishing in the country with the object of silencing the independent press and in this way forcing the people to re-elect President [Alberto] Fujimori". The president has been in office since 1990.

Local human rights groups and the US-based Human Rights Watch have also protested. Amnesty International confirmed on November 27 that it was adopting Gen Robles as a "prisoner of conscience".

(November 29)

Europe 'not really working for East Timor'

José Ramos Horta, East Timor's spokesman and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, talks to **Frédéric Bobin**

SINCE you can't talk to President Suharto, have you managed to strike up a dialogue with the democratic opposition, in particular with its key figure, Megawati Sukarnoputri?

We have built up contacts over the years with the leaders of the democratic opposition. Most of them are aware that Timor was never a part of Indonesia. They know they can't campaign for human rights in Indonesia and at the same time back the dictatorship's policy of denying self-determination to the Timorese people.

Does Mrs Sukarnoputri herself favour your cause?

She once declared that Timor was part of Indonesia. But people close to her assured us this was not her real position. Right now, she's too busy trying to cobble together a coalition against Suharto.

Do European countries have a role to play in settling the Timorese conflict?

Countries like Portugal, Ireland and Sweden have adopted clear-cut positions and raised the Timor issue at international forums like the UN Human Rights Commission. But as a group the Europeans are not really doing anything.

Countries like France and the United Kingdom are holding back. Here in Paris, I didn't ask to see anyone in the government because I know from experience it is of no use. For France, it is more important to have relations with the Burmese junta than the dissident Aung San Suu Kyi; more important to have contacts with China's prime minister, Li Peng, than to be civil to the Dalai Lama; more important to sell arms to the Indonesian regime than to plead the Timorese people's case.

And the Americans?

Much more than the Europeans, the United States has taken up the Timor issue with President Suharto. The US administration has also decided to stop supplying the Indonesian army with M16 assault rifles and tanks. I'm convinced that Clinton's second term is going to be marked by Washington taking a more active part in pushing for democratic reform in Indonesia. Only the democratisation of political life can help to safeguard the economic advantages acquired. I'm not denying that the regime can point to positive economic results. It has reduced poverty and illiteracy. But politically, everything is still at a standstill.

I believe the US is going to prod the government to hold talks with its democratic opponents and, on Timor, with Bishop Carlos Belo and the imprisoned leader of the resistance, Xanana Gusmão, so as to find a solution based on the Timorese people's right to self-determination.

Over and above the problem of Timor, what are the main factors of destabilisation in Asia today?

The first is the introduction of sophisticated weapons by Westerners. A frenzied armaments race is going on in Asia. The absence of rights for workers and the oppression of intellectuals, journalists and students in countries such as Indonesia, Burma and China are also leading to destabilisation. The West can play a part here. There must be no direct confrontation, of course. All these regimes should be subjected to quiet, firm and unrelenting pressure to encourage reforms. All the economic advantages acquired could ultimately be threatened if there's no rapid transition to democracy.

(November 27)

Egyptians Stand by Female Circumcision

John Lancaster in Al Dabiya

IN OCTOBER, the parents of 4-year-old Amira Hassan did what they thought was their duty as good Muslims: They hired the family physician to snip off part of her genitals.

When she died a few hours later, apparently as a result of complications from anesthesia, Mahmoud Hassan and his wife, Atiyat, accepted it as God's will. But the Health Ministry has suspended the doctor, Ezzat Shehat, pending the outcome of the criminal investigation.

The death of the little girl — one of two who suffered the same fate at the hands of the same doctor on the same day — highlights the immense challenge faced by women's health advocates and some government officials in Egypt as they begin to confront the widely practiced ritual known as female circumcision.

Having ignored the issue for decades, public health authorities in Egypt this year were stunned by a national survey showing that 97 percent of married Egyptian women between the ages of 15 and 49 had undergone the procedure. Among women with daughters, 87 percent reported that at least one daughter had been circumcised or would be.

Like other countries in Africa where female circumcision is common, Egypt has come under growing international pressure to curb the practice. It has been linked to such potentially fatal health risks as bleeding, infection and complications relating to anesthesia — and, in later life, problems in childbirth and sexual relations. That pressure led, in July, to a decree by Health Minister Ismail Sallam barring health professionals from performing the operation.

But the decree has encountered stiff resistance from Islamic fundamentalists, including many within the medical establishment, who defend the practice as necessary to protect women from the consequences of excessive sexual desire.

Judging from a visit to this village on the west bank of the Nile 320 miles south of Cairo, the ban has yet to touch the lives of ordinary Egyptians. Many people said they had never heard of it. Others said they would ignore it. And local prosecutors acknowledged that they investigate circumcision cases with little vigor, if at all.

In the meantime, health workers say, girls as young as 3 continue to undergo painful and sometimes risky surgery at the hands of poorly trained midwives, village barbers and, in many cases, doctors who work for the same ministry that is claiming to combat the practice.

Human rights advocates are divided on the best way to combat the phenomenon. Some say parliament should make female circumcision a criminal offense. Others say the government should concentrate on promoting public awareness of the risks.

"People say that it is so deeply rooted that [making it a criminal offense] will just drive it underground," said Marie Assaad, who chairs a coalition of Egyptian non-governmental organizations that is trying to combat the problem. "Many doctors still believe it is a very important protection against disease and immorality and that talking against it is a Western fad."

Among religious conservatives in Egypt, female circumcision is typically defended on the basis of sayings attributed to the prophet Muhammad. But others contend the practice has no basis in Islam. They note that it is unknown in ultraconservative Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, occurs widely within Egypt's Coptic Christian minority and may date to the time of the pharaohs, long before the advent of Islam.

In sub-Saharan Africa, female circumcision is a tribal custom that occurs across a broad spectrum of religions and cultures in more than 20 countries. The operation can range in severity from partial or full removal of the clitoris and surrounding tissue to a radical procedure in which the external genitals are cut away and the area closed with stitches, leaving only a small opening for urination and menstruation.

Egypt's government and official media largely ignored the subject until 1994, when CNN broadcast footage of a screaming 10-year-old Egyptian girl undergoing the procedure at the hands of a Cairo barber.

The government promised action. But it soon ran into opposition from the Gad Haq Ali Gad Haq, then Egypt's senior religious figure and the sheik of Cairo's Al Azhar University, who warned that "girls who are not circumcised when young have a sharp temperament and bad habits."

Attitudes are even more entrenched in such rural villages as Al Dabiya. "Even if the law prohibits it, people will still do this operation," said Hoda Abdelmoreed, 29, a mother of three who teaches at a high school in nearby Armant. "Europe and the United States need it more than we do. They wouldn't have AIDs and all these other problems."

Capital City Gasps in Quest for Clean Air

Molly Moore in Mexico City

THIS IS what life has come to in a city that had 321 bad air days last year: Joggers in parks wear face masks; children at the U.S.-run American School play inside a giant glass bubble; a clear sky is front-page news.

And that's on the good days. On bad days, the government warns residents to leave town or stay inside their houses with the windows shut. It dispatches extra staff to city health clinics to meet the crush of patients and it bans operation of cars industries and gas stations.

"No end to pollution misery," screamed a recent headline in one of the capital city's newspapers as city officials issued five consecutive days of emergency alerts. It was the longest continuous period in the six years of the warning system. The alerts close industries and cut back car usage when pollution is 2¼ times the maximum considered safe by the World Health Organization (WHO).

This year marks a decade since the city officially recognized its air pollution crisis and initiated controls, dedicating hundreds of millions of dollars and a bottomless pit of political promises to the life-threatening problem. Yet Mexico City and its 22 million inhabitants are facing one of the worst winters of pollution — and the season has only just begun.

The WHO has ranked the air of Mexico City, with its gumbo of pollutants belched from automobile exhausts and industry, and leaked from millions of rooftop cooking-gas tanks, as the most contaminated in the world. In each of the six categories of pollution, from ozone to suspended particles, Mexico City's levels are at least double those considered safe for human habitation. The next closest cities are Los Angeles, Jakarta and Sao Paulo, each of which exceeds standards in four of the six categories, according to the most recent air pollution study of megacities by the WHO, in 1992. "Of the cities for which there is sufficient data to compare, Mexico City has the worst overall air pollution," agreed the Washington-based World Resources Institute.

Leticia Mercado, 27, a sales clerk at a fabric shop in the heart of the city's business district, where pollution levels are intense, doesn't need scientific data for confirmation. "It's horrible," she said in a raspy voice. "My throat is always sore and I have problems breathing."

As a measure of just how bad pollution is here, the WHO says humans shouldn't breathe air with more than 100 to 120 parts per billion of ozone contaminants for more than one day a year. Last year, residents breathed that level, or more, for 321 days, according to city officials.

The impact on the health of the city and its residents is devastating. In October, when readings rose above 250 parts, or points, city hospitals and clinics reported a deluge of 400,000 pollution-related patients and 300 deaths during the five-day emergency. Health officials estimate that 1 million residents suffer permanent breathing difficulties, headaches, coughs and eye irritations. And new studies have suggested that children living in neighborhoods with the worst air could suffer permanent alterations to cells in their nose and throat linings that could lead to cancer later in life.

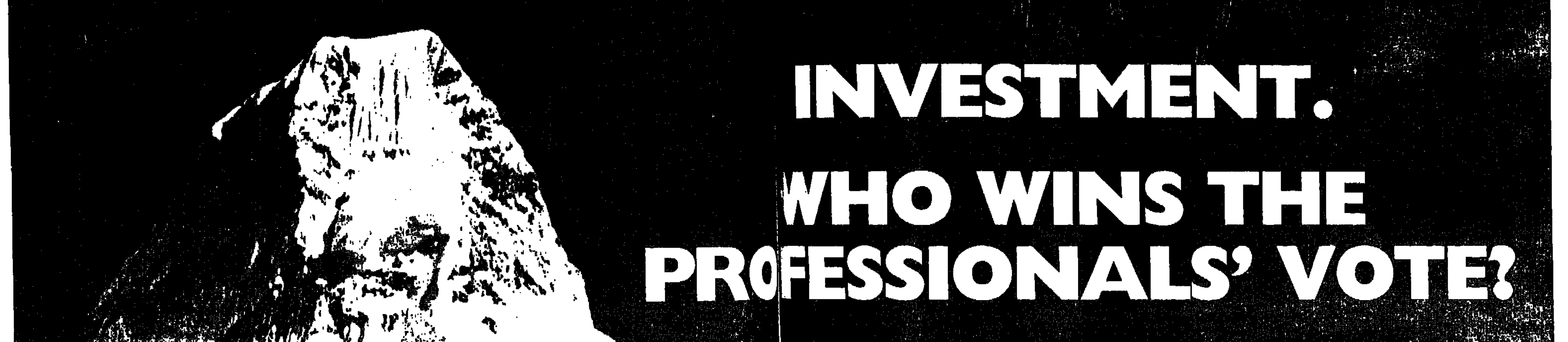
Mexico City's cleanup efforts of the last decade have yielded some results: Today half of the city's cars use unleaded gasoline, cutting dramatically the lead content in the air. The "day without a car" program requires most private cars to stay off the streets one day a week year-round, and additional days when emergencies are declared.

Because of that emergency alert system, the city no longer has the occasional spikes of catastrophic pollution that once sent ozone levels to 3¼ times safety norms, as occurred in 1992 when levels rocketed to 398 points. The weather of the last two or three years also has been cooperative in preventing prolonged periods of maximum contamination.

Even so, the number of days when pollution levels spiral far above WHO recommendations has proliferated. Many people have purchased a second car to get around the "day without a car" restrictions and the city's growth is unabated.

As a result, the overall percentage of bad air days has changed little since 1992 — one of the worst years on record — when 10 emergency alert days were declared. The city surpassed the 1992 numbers in '95 and '96, with 12 emergency days each. This year could break all records, with chilly November and December traditionally among the worst pollution months of the year.

On most days the city is cloaked in a grimy, brown shroud of contaminants. From a busy downtown street corner, buildings in the next block disappear into a fuzzy, sepia haze. From an airplane, the city appears to be sitting at the bottom of a bowl of muddy water.



Canada's Elect

Thomas Mallon

SELECTED STORIES
By Alice Munro
Knopf. 545pp. $30

ALICE MUNRO'S deeply imagined, almost awesome Selected Stories turn Faulkner's famous musing about the past's not really being past into an understatement. In Munro's world, the present is scarcely present; the moment we live in is just a flask in which the past's vapors mingle and assert their continuing will. The past itself — the location of psychological destiny — is most often a place, the Canadian hometown or distant rural origin of a present-day narrator. Toronto, in Alice Munro's geography, is a suburb of little towns like Dalgleish and Carstairs and West Hanratty.

Her stories lead back to boarding houses and farms and old department stores, into long-ago jiltings and drownings and suppressed longings that haven't stopped resonating somewhere else. "Serious people — that's how I would try to describe them," says the narrator about her parents in "The Progress of Love." "Serious the way hardly anybody is anymore." It's a good description of both this collection's *dramatis personae* and the stories themselves. If Munro's basic subject matter may sometimes feel circumscribed, what she accomplishes with it, imaginatively, seems nearly limitless.

Many of these long short stories (just 28 in 545 large pages) contain a novel's worth of characters, almost all of them stood up and set running with remarkable speed. In *"Chaddeleys and Flemings,"* a narrator wonders if her mother's cousin Iris had "always been like this, always brash and greedy and scared, decent, maybe even admirable . . ." Within a couple of pages, each adjective in the string has been dramatized and earned.

An impatient reader may want to say of Munro what an exasperated creative-writing teacher remarks about the work of one of her characters: "Too many things going on at the same time; also too many people. Think, he told her. What is the important thing? What do you want us to pay attention to? Think." But to Munro it's all important, and the careful reader will find it all interesting, will acclimate himself to the layers and byways of the author's narrative style, which works, to use one story's words about another matter, "like a dream that goes back and back into other dreams, over hills and through doorways . . ."

Munro can drop one character or whole situation and go on to something else without ever making you feel she's gone off the point. If a story's population ends up seeming still as randomly assorted as life's own elements, the characters will have been, each in turn, sharply illuminated. As often as not, on second reading, or just an hour later, their connectedness will suddenly manifest itself.

Munro will sometimes let the cat out of the bag right away ("Mrs. Sutcliffe was the one who talked Marietta's mother out of hanging herself") so that she can get on to the truly interesting business, the first cause, which occurred before the cat was born or the bag was stitched. Some of these stories' *mysteries never yield themselves* up, but Munro's inconclusiveness is more satisfying than most writers' clarity. The barely explained malignity in "Vandals" — two adults' trashing of an empty house — proves as chilling as a stack of corpses would. False memory is a recurring theme, first-person narrators owning up to their inabilities and embroideries, though in the end the whole idea of false memory comes to seem a contradiction in terms: "How hard it is for me to believe that I made that up. It seems so much the truth it is the truth; it's what I believe about them."

Munro's sheer aptness, her precision of psychology and language, becomes the chief beauty of her work. One narrator wishes that her mother "could manage to withdraw with dignity, instead of reaching out all the time to cast her stricken shadow." The reporting in a small-town newspaper is "copious and assured," the harmless character *with the racy stories a "blandly out*rageous" fellow. In one bravura paragraph, as a girl permits herself to be groped by a stranger on a train, the landscape through its window gets transformed into a prurient panorama: "Victim and accomplice she was borne past Glassco's Jams and Marmalades, past the big pulsating pipes of oil refineries. They glided into suburbs where bedsheets, and towels used to wipe up intimate stains, flapped leeringly on the clotheslines, where even the children seemed to be frolicking lewdly in the schoolyards, and the very truck drivers stopped at the railway crossings must be thrusting their thumbs gleefully into curled hands." Munro's ear for speech catches even its stumblings: " 'But would you get such venomous' — Rose had to stop and start the word again — 'such venomousness, simply from ambition?' "

The frequency with which a char*acter's personal reflections seem to* apply to Munro's own subtleties — a recurring dream of the narrator in "Friend of My Youth" stops because "it was too transparent in its hopefulness, too easy in its forgiveness" — testifies to the integrity of method and matter in this enormous offering of stories. The whole volume makes one believe anew in fiction's power to transfigure even the bland and bleak. In "Material," the narrator marvels at the exactitude with which her ex-husband, a writer, has rendered in prose their hapless former housemate: Dotty "was lucky to live in that basement for a few months and eventually to have this done to her, though she doesn't know what has been done and wouldn't care for it, probably, if she did know. She has passed into Art. It doesn't happen to everybody." I suspect there are dozens of souls, from one end of Canada to the other, glimpsed by Alice Munro over the past half-century, who will *never know they are equally elect.*



Vagabonds, Rogues and Murderers

Kwame Dawes

THE OPEN SORE OF A CONTINENT: A Personal Narrative Of the Nigerian Crisis
By Wole Soyinka
Oxford University Press. 176pp. $19.95

NOBEL LAUREATE and internationally acclaimed playwright Wole Soyinka demonstrates in this expansive, energetic, freewheeling tour de force that the horrific succession of totalitarian regimes, military juntas and corrupt politicians that has stunted the development of many African countries (and particularly Nigeria) in no way overshadows the passionate, strikingly intelligent analysis of such tragic realities by the continent's writers and thinkers. This remarkable collection of essays, initially delivered as lectures at Harvard, often assumes a prophetic air — a kind of prophecy akin to that of Old Testament seers, who were given as much to social and political analysis as they were to predicting the future — and reveals that there is hope in places like Nigeria, contained in the tireless quest for humanitarian civility in the face of corruption and dastardly political intrigue.

The Open Sore Of A Continent is very much in the style of another important Soyinka work, Myth, Literature And The African World, which, while not tackling issues as immediate and dire as those in this newest work, shares the same unmistakable intelligence, frankness and willingness to attract controversy surrounding issues that are important to the continent of Africa and to Nigeria in particular. The Open Sore Of A Continent is daring. Soyinka does not mince his words, nor does he spare any of the gallery of rogues that he parades out for the world to see, including the current Nigerian head of state, Sani Abacha, whom Soyinka regards as a most base and corrupt ruler.

Soyinka's thesis is a simple one: The current rulers of Nigeria are rogues, vagabonds and murderers who have revealed their true colors in the brutal execution of activist and writer Ken Saro Wiwa in direct and arrogant defiance of objections from the world community. He argues that their regime is founded on an illegal claim that annulled the fair and peaceful elections of 1993, during which Bashorun Moshood Abiola, now imprisoned, won a respectable majority.

Soyinka demands that Abiola be recognized as president and that civilian rule be restored. Failure to do so, he contends, would amount to a perpetuation of the kind of human atrocity that the death of Saro Wiwa represents and, more disturbingly, the death of Nigeria. "In Sani Abacha's self-manifesting destiny as the last Nigerian despot," Soyinka says, "we may be witnessing, alas, the end of Nigerian history."

Soyinka's sophisticated discussion seeks to understand the meaning of nationhood and to try to contextualize the problems in Nigeria within the disturbing developments taking place in the rest of the world. His explorations, then, of the business of nationhood, of culture, of the meaning of society, are especially relevant to the way in which we are trying to grapple with the new geopolitical realities of a post-Cold War world. In addressing these issues, Soyinka avoids any semblance of finesse. The reader is aware that Soyinka believes he is grappling with issues of life and death and is growing impatient with those who try to ignore the horrendous acts of dictators and totalitarian rulers that he sees as corrupt exploiters of Africa.

Ultimately, the book does not offer a detailed vision for Nigeria's future. One is not certain, that is, how the troubling questions of ethnic rivalry, North-and-South tension and religious strife will be addressed by the recognition of Abiola as president, but one is persuaded that any hopes of resolving these problems will not be realized until a legal government is in power. Indeed, Soyinka's tone here is one of alarm. He seems convinced that the world has to be shaken, shocked and goaded into acting on behalf of a Nigerian society that he sees as moving inexorably toward civil war and political implosion. For him, the principle is the thing: A country founded upon a lie will crumble. Although he does not view Abiola as a panacea for all of Nigeria's woes, he regards the installation of the man as an expression of the will of the people, an act that will offer Nigeria one last hope of success.

Growing Up and Up

Jennifer Howard

THE GIANT'S HOUSE: A Romance
By Elizabeth McCracken
Dial. 259pp. $19.95

YOU WOULDN'T think, in this day and age, that hip young novelists would find spinster librarians appealing as the stuff of fiction.

But Elizabeth McCracken, who appears on Granta's controversial list of the best American novelists under 40, chooses to make a spinster librarian the narrator of her National Book Award-nominated first novel. Though it's billed as the story of an unusual love affair, The Giant's House works best as a character study. McCracken — herself a former librarian — may be working from an old stereotype, but she splits it open to reveal something complex and decidedly twisted.

It's 1950, and Peggy Cort, 26 years old, is running the town library in Brewsterville, Massachusetts, a Cape Cod town "not close enough to the rest of the world to be convenient nor far enough to be attractively remote . . . Our zoning laws keep us quaint, but just."

Brewsterville assumes that Peggy is an old maid in the making, but her frumpy persona conceals the workings of a mind that's capable of — but frustrated in its search for — passion. She's in love with the dispensation of information.

"This is a reference librarian's fantasy," she says. "A patron arrives, says, Tell me something. You reach across the desk and pull him toward you . . . stroke his forehead, whisper facts in his ear. The climate of Chad is tropical in the south, desert in the north . . . Do you love me? . . . I could find you British Parliamentary papers, I could track down a book you only barely remember reading. Do you love me now?"

Cerebral fantasies aside, love seems unlikely to enter Peggy Cort's life in any way, shape or form. Then it arrives in the unlikely person of 12-year-old James Carlson Sweatt. James is twice an anomaly. He's a serious, willing reader; he also suffers from gigantism. "Five feet tall in kindergarten; six foot two at age eleven. He turned sixteen and hit seven-five the same week."

"His bones had great plans," Peggy says (such odd, lovely, offhand observations are one of the pleasures of McCracken's prose).

The day he walks into Peggy's library, it's love at first sight. No female Humbert Humbert, Peggy doesn't seduce James, she befriends him. She supplies him with intriguing books, insinuates herself into his family.

As he grows up, James's health deteriorates; his body can't support itself, and Peggy's role grows more intimate. Needing James the way she does, she brushes up against the cliché of the lonely librarian: desperately, quietly awaiting a rescuer. But the way she attaches herself to him makes her more psychopath than Cinderella. If The Giant's House is a romance, it's a Gothic one — which of course is what makes it interesting.

Record fine follows bank scandal

Alex Brummer

RECORD-breaking fines and penalties are to be imposed on the London-based merchant bank, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, by City regulators as a result of its failure to control the activities of the investment manager, Peter Young.

The German-owned bank, which has seen an enormous outflow of business since the scandal erupted in September, will become the first City institution to face a fine in excess of £1 million ($1.69 million) and will be required to repatriate up to £200 million to make good the losses of the 90,000 investors in three European investment funds in which Mr Young was involved.

The regulatory action — to be taken in the new year — will be a severe blow to the prestige of one of the City's oldest and most pre-eminent names, which includes among its clients members of the royal family.

In recent years it has become the London base for the ambitions of its parent, Deutsche Bank, to become a global investment bank.

Mr Young, aged 38, an Oxford educated executive, is under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office over his alleged role in establishing a secret web of companies in which some funds placed with the Morgan Grenfell trusts were invested.

Mr Young and five senior managers at Morgan Grenfell Asset Management have been fired.

The City's fund management regulator, Imro, regards the Morgan Grenfell affair as the most serious breach of the rules governing investor safety since the Financial Services Act was put into place a decade ago. It is planning to force a reluctant Deutsche Morgan Grenfell to make good every last penny of investment returns.

This, together with the £180 million which the German owners have already been required to inject into the funds to stabilise their value, means that the total cost of the rescue will reach close to £400 million. This would make the Young affair one of the costliest in the City's history.

The regulator has taken its inquiries to the highest level, including an investigation of the role of Michael Dobson, the chief executive of the whole investment banking operation and a director of Deutsche Bank in Germany. But it is thought he will not face disciplinary action.

It also has become concerned that successive trustees of Morgan Grenfell Asset Management — General Accident which resigned early this year, and the Royal Bank of Scotland — may not have exercised their task as trustees with sufficient diligence.

The trustees allegedly allowed Mr Young and other Morgan Grenfell Asset Management executives to breach the rules governing shareholdings in companies which have not yet obtained a stock market quotation.

Ex-Barings executives in the dock

Dan Atkinson

A £1 BILLION writ has been slapped on nine former senior executives of crashed merchant bank Barings by its former auditor, Coopers & Lybrand. Last week's move has given a further upward twist to the spiral of litigation triggered by the activities of jailed rogue trader Nick Leeson.

Lashing Barings's executives for failing to prevent the collapse, Coopers said: "The management of Barings were not open with us and in our opinion were in breach of the duties which they owed to Barings."

Coopers issued the writ on the first anniversary of Leeson's imprisonment in Singapore, where he is serving a six-and-a-half year sentence for his central role in the £800 million collapse of Britain's oldest merchant bank.

The nine named in the writ include former deputy chairman Andrew Tuckey and ex-investment bank chief Peter Norris.

One of the others named, Ian Hopkins, former head of treasury and risk at Barings Investment Bank, said: "This is a preposterous attempt by Coopers . . . to divert culpability." He said he looked forward to explaining in court how Coopers had ignored the difficulties he had encountered at Barings.

Coopers said it was taking the action effectively to join the nine in a similar £1 billion writ issued by Barings's administrators Ernst & Young. That writ, issued last year, blames Coopers, as auditors, for much of the Barings débâcle.

The Ernst writ also names Deloitte & Touche, which was partly responsible for auditing Barings in the early 1990s when Leeson was undertaking his wild gambles on Far Eastern markets.

Aside from these actions, Barings bondholders are suing three stockbrokers — Hoare Govett, Barclays de Zoete Wedd and Cazenove — for £100 million, claiming they gave misleading information about Barings when selling the bonds in January 1994, along with a dozen former Barings directors, including Mr Tuckey and former chairman Peter Baring.

Taken together with wrangling inside the City's disciplinary machine as some former Barings executives fight attempts to punish them for their roles in the affair, the legal fall-out from the February 1995 crash is likely to drift well into the next century and consume millions of pounds in lawyers' fees.



Jose Ignacio Lopez (left), accused of stealing plans of a car factory, with Ferdinand Piech, Volkswagen chairman PHOTO: REINHARD KRAUSE

VW shares take dive

Denis Staunton in Berlin

SHARES in Volkswagen, Europe's biggest car-maker, fell by more than 4 per cent on Monday after General Motors made clear it would not drop charges of industrial espionage against its arch-rival despite last week's resignation of the VW executive, Jose Ignacio Lopez.

VW shares closed at DM593 ($385), down DM25.75, after falling as low as DM582.2. The shares took a similar dive last week after an American court allowed GM to proceed with its industrial espionage lawsuit against VW under racketeering legislation.

Investors showed their disappointment and anxiety that the resignation of Mr Lopez, VW's purchasing chief, had not brought VW any closer to a settlement with GM, said Michael Klein, an analyst at Delbrueck & Co.

GM and its German subsidiary, Opel, accuse Mr Lopez of stealing industrial secrets when he left the company to join VW in 1993, taking seven other GM executives with him.

The two sides were due to appear in a Detroit court on Tuesday for the latest stage in a civil action GM is taking against VW under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act.

The sacking of Mr Lopez was one of GM's chief prerequisites for an out-of-court settlement, but there is little or no sign of agreement on two other demands — a full apology and a large financial settlement.

Both were reaffirmed at the weekend by David Herman, Opel's American chairman, who said that an out-of-court settlement was desirable. "I can't imagine that if someone admits an error and wants to rectify the situation we would not be willing to talk to them," he told the Wall Street Journal.

But VW fears that by admitting wrongdoing on the part of Mr Lopez, it could prejudice criminal proceedings pending in both Germany and the United States. It favours a mutual expression of regret by both sides, with GM admitting that it unfairly damaged VW's reputation with its spying accusations — unacceptable to a crusading, obsessive Mr Herman.

GM executives are furious at the continuing support of VW chairman, Ferdinand Piech, for Mr Lopez, who will continue to draw a salary of more than *DM400,000* a month from VW until his contract expires in 1998. "Usually you'd see people distancing themselves from an individual defendant and pledging co-operation with the authorities," a GM source reportedly said.

GM refuses to say how much financial compensation it wants from VW but German media reports have mentioned figures as high as DM7.5 billion.

Mr Lopez is credited, along with Mr Piech, with revival in VW's fortunes that has seen the company's net profits double in the first nine months of this year. Mr Lopez helped the company to cut costs by reducing component prices.

Oil firms face massive clean-up bill

Celia Weston

EUROPE'S oil and gas companies face a $23 billion bill for disposing of offshore rigs and platforms in the wake of the resurgence of the political controversy which dogged the Brent Spar.

This is the key finding of a confidential report commissioned for the European Union's environment and energy directives, seen by the Guardian, and discussed at a private meeting late last month. It details concerns about the fate of more than 1,600 offshore installations, most of which will end their life within 30 years.

Estimates in the 600-page report put costs at $23 billion for removing steel structures alone — excluding concrete base substructures and the disposal costs of floating production facilities. The study estimates a cash outlay of $890 million to $1 billion each year for 25 years.

Such reports are commonly used as a prelude to the European Commission preparing legislation. Difficulties for the exploration and production companies would increase if the EU decided it were politically expedient to legislate to limit the disposal methods companies are allowed to use.

The report says: "Typically oil and gas fields have an economic life of 20 to 40 years and it therefore follows that a much larger decommissioning programme will be required over the next decades, predicted to peak during the period 2010 to 2020." It forecasts that this will mean about 25 installations being abandoned each year during that peak period.

The EU environment commissioner, Ritt Bjerregaard, who intervened during the Brent Spar oil storage buoy controversy, wants to be seen to take a hard line. But information in the report will also be available to the Oslo/Paris commission (OsPar), which controls the rules for dumping and waste disposal at sea and includes all European countries. Other EU commissioners are likely to back a call from Mrs Bjerregaard to get tough on the oil companies through legislation only if OsPar's decisions are seen as not hard-line enough.

The sea-based activity working group of OsPar was due to consider the rules for decommissioning offshore installations last week. Its recommendations will be put to the full commission meeting next June.

The oil and gas industry will continue to argue that disposal at sea should not be ruled out as an option — including the possibility of turning rigs into reef-like havens for sea life.

In Brief

WALT DISNEY announced *its fourth-quarter profit* rose 60 per cent amid record attendances at its theme parks. Disney's fourth-quarter turnover rose 12 per cent to $5.27 billion from $4.69 billion to September 30 compared with the same period last year.

IBM said its board had authorised the repurchase of $3.5 billion in shares, bringing its planned buybacks to $6 billion this year. The world's largest computer maker has purchased a total of $9.7 billion of its shares since January 1995.

OLIVETTI, the troubled Italian computer and office equipment group, is reported to have signed a letter of intent to sell its loss-making PC division to Centenary Company, a US restructuring specialist.

THE UK government is to refer the ferry merger between P&O and Stena to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Trade and Industry Secretary Ian Lang said that the referral was because the joint venture gave rise to competition concerns in the market for Channel crossings.

RICHARD LINES, one-time chemical industry mogul, was found guilty of fraudulently inflating his MTM chemical company's worth by £250 million, on two counts of false accounting and one count of making false statements.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates December 2	Sterling rates November 25
Australia	2.0577-2.0614	2.0601-2.0626
Austria	18.27-18.29	17.87-17.89
Belgium	53.58-53.63	52.32-52.42
Canada	2.2777-2.2799	2.2423-2.2444
Denmark	9.94-9.95	9.74-9.75
France	8.81-8.82	8.59-8.60
Germany	2.5972-2.5996	2.5399-2.5424
Hong Kong	13.02-13.03	12.92-12.93
Ireland	1.0001-1.0019	0.9986-1.0004
Italy	2,552-2,556	2,514-2,517
Japan	191.58-191.79	188.03-188.31
Netherlands	2.9145-2.9172	2.8498-2.8531
New Zealand	2.3657-2.3689	2.3456-2.3487
Norway	10.82-10.83	10.70-10.71
Portugal	261.61-261.85	256.21-256.45
Spain	218.78-218.99	213.64-213.81
Sweden	11.31-11.33	11.10-11.13
Switzerland	2.2117-2.2145	2.1444-2.1471
USA	1.6842-1.6852	1.6722-1.6732
ECU	1.3431-1.3444	1.3173-1.3186

FTSE100 Share index down 18.1 at 4038.5. FTSE 250 index down 7.8 at 4414.8. Gold down $4.80 at $371.00.

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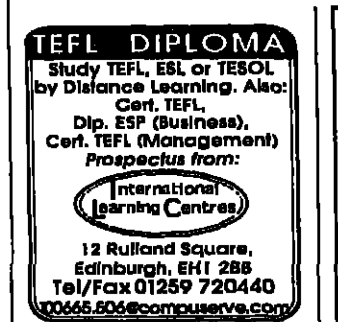
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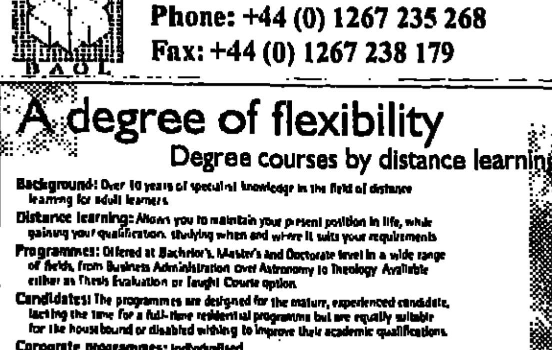
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Further details and a full job description available from the General Secretary, SPCK, Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone Road, London, NW1 4DU. Telephone 0171-387 5282.



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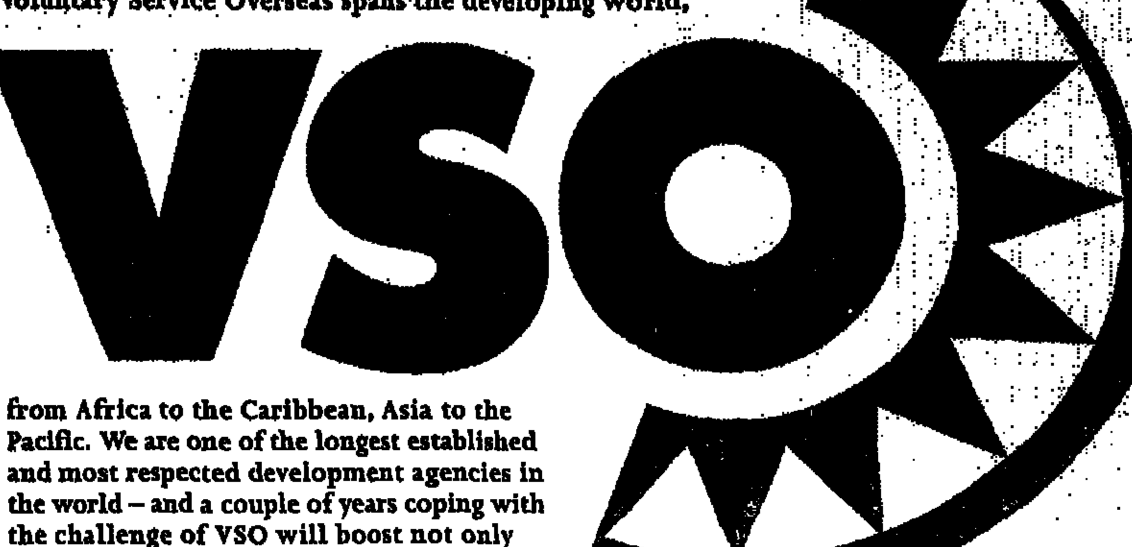
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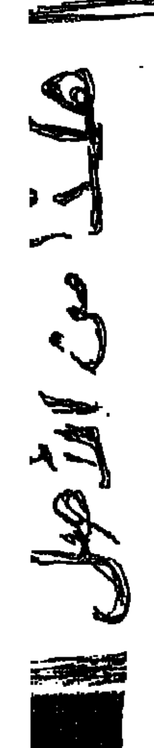
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Goon but not forgotten

Michael Bentine

MICHAEL BENTINE, who has died aged 74, didn't really need much more than his own vast, infectious, over-excited good humour to get laughs, but he was, for more than 40 years, the master of the eccentric prop. In the early 1950s it could be something as simple as a kitchen-sink plunger, pressed into service as a telescope, peg-leg etc in a series of lightning cameos; later he went on to pioneer a then-unique gadget-ridden type of television wittiness that broke many rules of established comedy and became highly popular.

His background was certainly unusual enough to sow the seeds of a lifetime in surreal humour: he was the grandson of a vice-president of Peru, an Old Etonian and an RAF wartime intelligence officer, and a co-founder of The Goon Show — sometimes known as "the forgotten Goon" because the early episodes he appeared in were not saved by the BBC, and the show only really captured the imagination of the public after he left.

His private life was beset by devastating tragedy: a son was killed in a plane crash and both his daughters died of cancer. His strong belief in an "other" life and his research into paranormal phenomena gave him the strength to cope with these appalling events.

Bentine had one of the most fertile minds in British comedy, yet because of his oddness he was difficult to classify, and his career suffered as a result. It could be said that he sometimes made the public uneasy — telling funny stories one minute and then talking earnestly about the supernatural the next — but this was perhaps an understandable reaction to a man whose oddball quirkiness was married to a fierce intelligence and an unquenchable curiosity.

Grandfather Don Antonio Bentin Palamerra, a Peruvian silver miner, was for eight years vice-president of the Republic and at his death was president-elect. His son, Adan Bentin, moved to Britain in 1899 and married an Englishwoman, Florence Dawkins. Michael Bentin (the "e" was later added for stage reasons) was born in Watford.



Michael Bentine . . . his oddball quirkiness was married to a fierce intelligence and an unquenchable curiosity

During the war, Bentine was at first refused by the RAF because his father was a registered alien, but he persisted and wound up as an intelligence officer. He was reticent about his wartime work, but it left him with a distrust of authority which lasted the rest of his life.

When the war ended, it was apparent that Bentine had neither the patience nor the aptitude for the kind of conventional career his education and experience might have suggested, and he went into show business.

With his friend Tony Sherwood, he presented a visual act, Sherwood and Forrest. Alfred Marks and Tony Hancock were learning their trade at the same time, as were two other young hopefuls — Harry Secombe and Peter Sellers.

Bentine and Secombe warmed to each other and became firm friends. They frequented the same pub as Peter Sellers, and after a while, Bentine was introduced to another clown. His name was Spike Milligan — and the four men were destined to be linked in a comedy show that revolutionised radio humour.

The first series of what became The Goon Show was called Crazy People, and Bentine played Professor Osric Pureheart, a zany adventurer and explorer who seemed an only-slightly exaggerated version of himself. Although his later departure from the series was amicable, it was felt that as writers, Bentine and Milligan were working at creative cross-purposes, and when Milligan's ascendancy was established, Bentine thought it was time to move on.

Bentine developed two delightful children's puppet series for BBC TV, The Bumblies and The Potties, and went on to create It's A Square World — a show based around elaborate props and miniature model sets. He was also a great favourite on the nightclub circuit and a frequent chat show guest.

In 1975 he wrote an autobiography, The Long Banana Skin, which was updated in 1993 as The Reluctant Jester, and he was also the author of two highly-regarded books about the paranormal: The Door Marked Summer and Open Your Mind.

Stephen Dixon

Michael Bentine, comedian, born January 26, 1922; died November 26, 1996

Putting life in the logo

Paul Rand

JUST as Islam has developed a vivid culture of pattern, since portrayal of man or beast is construed as blasphemy, so Paul Rand's orthodox Jewish upbringing proscribed the making of pictures. Still, he surreptitiously started copying shop signs and fascias when he was three and became one of the most influential graphic designers of the century.

Rand, who has died aged 82, was born in Brooklyn the son of a grocer. He persuaded his father to pay a $25 enrolment fee for night classes at Manhattan's leading art school, the Pratt Institute. Here he was introduced to the work of A M Cassandra, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and E McKnight Kauffer. At a time when American commercial art was likely to employ mawkish realistic illustrations and strident hard-sell, Rand was devising elegant Modernist alternatives.

He was first employed at the George Switzer Agency, where he designed letterforms, but by 1935 opened his own studio on East 38th Street. His first clients were local firms: Disney Hats, Schenley Liquors, Playtex and El Producto Cigars. For these most ethnic of US enterprises, Rand provided unique graphic design which nicely combined chaste European modernist taste with confident native pizazz.

Rand's book jackets for Alfred Knopf combined formal elements from abstract painting with pure, geometric type to create unique commercial images. Rand worked on layouts for Esquire, as well as for Direction, an arts magazine where he used imaginative graphics as memorable anti-Fascist agitprop.

Meanwhile his ties with the world of New York advertising were hardening. In 1941 a partner at Esquire-Coronet, William Weintraub, started an advertising agency and appointed Rand art director. He made ads for Dubonnet, Airwick and SmithKline and French.

It is not true that Rand invented the "logo", but he was one of the very first designers to sense the significance of capturing a company's essence in a single graphic device. To reflect the growing ambitions of designers and the enlarging status of design itself, he and his contemporaries moved from styling mere objects to redesigning entire corporations. This was the mid-1950s, the giddy period of Eisenhower visions: 1955 was the year US car production reached an all-time peak, the era Tom Wolfe called a "Bourbon Louis Romp". At this time Rand created a brilliant new corporate identity including logo, packaging, liveries and design manuals for IBM.

His achievement was to understand the value of the European modernism and to adapt it for popular use. He appreciated the essence of Cubism, de Stijl, Constructivism and the New Typography of the Bauhaus, but while the pious Europeans merely spoke about the democratic principles of Modernism, Rand actually put them to work. But just as the architectural visions of the Bauhaus were only realised in the service of corporate America, (when Gropius built the Pan-Am Building and Mies van der Rohe the Seagram), so the graphic, typographic and photographic ideals of the great Bauhausbucher, the scriptural source of Modernism, also only realised their potential in the service of IBM, Westinghouse, UPS and Cummins.

Rand was made Professor of Graphic Design at Yale University in 1956 and remained active to the end of his life, but latterly he was more concerned with writing. His great achievement was to bring together the heroic, but epicene world of European modernism with the gutsy, but sometimes crass, world of American commerce.

Rand leaves a widow, Marion Swannie Rand, a daughter and two grandsons, as well as some of the best logos ever designed, not to mention some curiously satisfied clients.

Stephen Bayley

Paul Rand, graphic designer, born 1914; died November 26, 1996

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Britain's shooters feel betrayed. Their guns, bullets and businesses are being taken away from them. **Christopher Elliott** reports on their angry reaction

Guns go abroad

SMALL red lettering picks out the words from the background of peeling paint over the shop at the end of a nondescript suburban parade in north London. The Gunshop, the lettering says.

Inside, but not for much longer, stands Joe Beatham. He is surrounded by some of the £40,000-worth of pistols and accessories that he says the Government has rendered worthless: 9 mm Brownings, .44 Magnum Smith & Wessons, shoulder holsters and boxes full of ammunition. As a result of what he perceives as the state's "betrayal", he is moving his family and his business out of Britain, lock, stock and barrel, so to speak.

"I am going to see how much money I can get out of the Government and then move out. I am going to see that me and my family never contribute another bit of revenue to this country again. I have been betrayed for political expediency."

Beatham, a Liverpudlian, aged 43, says his plan is to find a suitable property near Calais or Boulogne and set up a shooting complex.

He will not be alone. Since Parliament voted last month, in the wake of the Dunblane massacre, to ban handguns larger than .22 calibre and require smaller pieces to be kept at secure gun clubs, 60,000 licensed handgun holders in the UK have been thrown into a spin. Many are packing bags and taking their guns or their entire lives abroad.

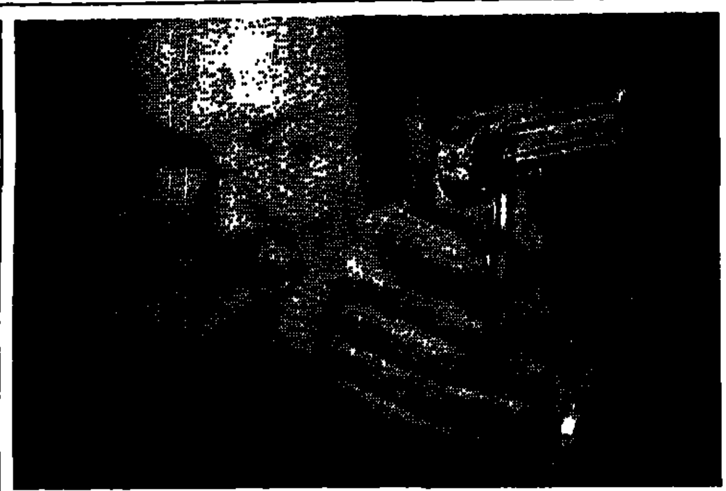
Scotland Yard and other police forces have already seen an increase in applications for European passes to travel with guns, and the Department of Trade and Industry reports a rise in the number of requests for export licences. There is a small but growing army on the march, fuelled by the loss of a sport and in many cases livelihoods.

The raw anger of the shooting fraternity (most are men) blares out of the November issue of Target Gun, the official journal of the National Pistol Association. Slapped across many of the standard advertisements for 22LR Beretta Mod 76 pistols and 9 mm 147 gram jacketed bullets are mock flyposters which leave no room for restraint or doubt.

"Entire business MURDERED by Thomas Hamilton" lies across the half-page advert for Shooters, a Welsh rifle and pistol club. Another advert for Howitzer Products, based in Oxfordshire, has this stamped all over it: "Eight staff at Howitzer. Eight more Hamilton victims."

Shooters trace the beginnings of the sport of rifle and pistol shooting in Britain to the country's failure in the Boer war, particularly the battle of Majuba Hill in 1881 when Boer marksmen proved vastly superior. The army command decided that the way to achieve good marksmanship was to encourage the setting up of civilian clubs, whose members could be called upon to fight in time of war or used to instruct "green" troops. Lord Salisbury said he could see the day when there would be a rifle in every cottage in England.

Improved marksmanship was credited with being a key factor in the successful retreat from Mons in the first world war. But the ethos, and the practice, waned after the second world war. By the time of Hungerford, when Michael Ryan shot 16 people dead on August 19, 1987, the reaction of the public was surprise and bemusement that ordinary individuals were allowed to keep weapons such as AK-47 rifles at home, and in such quantities.



Joe Beatham: 'betrayed for political expediency' PHOTO: DAVID SILLITOE

Hungerford began the backlash against the shooting fraternity's 2,000 clubs. When the Government banned self-loading rifles in 1988, many shooters felt the police should have been penalised for poorly administering licensing controls rather than harassing law-abiding citizens. Gradually calm was restored. And then Dunblane . . .

"When Dunblane happened most of us were sick," says Beatham. "I have four kids and it just doesn't bear thinking about. I just wanted to blot it from my mind and pretend that it didn't happen."

Jan Stevenson, aged 53, is the editor and proprietor of the magazine, Handgunner. At its peak it sold 29,000 copies but it took a dive after Hungerford and was selling 15,000 at the time of Dunblane in March.

Stevenson's passionate criticism of the Government's new gun laws is fuelled by libertarian convictions. "To say people are embittered is an understatement. The saddest thing is that there are tens of thousands of people whose pride of citizenship has been taken from them. Arms are the emblem of a free man. The essence of the relationship between the citizen and the state is that you are prepared to fight for it. Now that has been completely reversed: the citizens have been turned into serfs."

THIS heady mixture of a loss of faith and a loss of business has prompted the search for a fresh start outside Britain. The men of handguns are turning their sights to France, Belgium and Jersey.

The Kensington Rifle and Pistol Club, founded in 1909 out of the post-Boer war movement, is following a new path abroad. "We are currently in talks with a gun club in France that would allow us to use our guns," said Peter Brooksmith, the club's honorary secretary.

He is just one among a number of dealers and shooters looking for a new start in a country that has a traditionally strong gun lobby.

"The appeal of northern France is that it is feasible as a day trip," said Richard Laws, secretary of the Shooters' Rights Association, who also runs pistol awareness training courses for bodyguards.

For each shooter who goes, there are others who will stay — and they have begun to explore possible alternatives to handguns. Graham Downing, a member of the British Shooting Sports Council, says that many people are exploring a switch to rifle shooting, as rifles (self-loading varieties apart) are not covered by the ban. "Pistol shooters are already applying to join rifle clubs. Many will go that way," he says.

A few optimists among them believe that pistol shooters will be able simply to "re-invent" the sport, by building weapons that fall just outside the specifications of a handgun set down in the new legislation. Laws believes that guns with barrels longer than the 30cm established as the definition of a handgun may make an appearance on the UK market within a year.

Compensation is the thorniest issue remaining for the Government and one that all shooters are adamant they will fight to the bitter end to improve. "The Government is saying it will give us £150 minimum or half the value of the gun. We want £250 minimum or the full value," said Laws.

For those who believe they have just been stripped of their birthright, the battle for compensation takes on a new meaning.

Stevenson, facing bankruptcy now that he can no longer publish Handgunner, said: "No one wants the money. You can't sell a right. So what are we going to do? People are going to use the compensation as revenge. We're going to stuff the Government for every penny possible."

Additional reporting by Alex Duval Smith in Paris



Ride of fear . . . A Liberian faction fighter takes to the streets of Monrovia armed with an assault rifle PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID GUTTENFELDER

Insecurity that grows out of an AK-47 barrel

Robert Lacville reports from Bamako on a UN conference against arms

THE famous AK-47 Kalashnikov is all too easily available in the markets of West Africa. Some come from places like Chad, others have filtered through from Lebanon and Afghanistan. These guns create insecurity: and it is impossible to stop them coming across the desert frontiers of Africa, most of which were drawn as a pencil line on a map in Paris.

As security breeds security (and wealth), so insecurity feeds upon itself. The United Nations-sponsored conference on the Prevention of Conflicts, Disarmament and Development, held last week in Bamako, the capital of Mali, concluded that the best way to stop the guns coming is to remove the incentive for people to buy them.

This was a colourful meeting of colonels and generals, of development workers and academics and rebel leaders. There were UN blue berets, and red berets, and green berets . . . and one colonel in desert fatigues dressed like the 12 Days of Christmas: his mottled uniform was the same colour as the pear tree after a partridge, two turtle doves, three French hens and four calling birds have been sitting on it for 12 days.

Some of the participants helped refugees, others have been refugees. I met those who had been beaten, and those who do the beating. I had lunch with some of them, and felt queasy.

I also lunched with Joseph Silva of the United Nations secretariat in New York. "Most wars these days are internal," he said. "Poverty and underdevelopment contribute to instability. The 1990s have seen more and more armed conflict for the control of scarce resources." This explains the UN call for strategies linking economic development and disarmament, which recognise that strong police and security forces (as opposed to strong armies) help the fight against poverty.

Underlying the debates in Bamako was the Liberian conflict with its thousands of weapons. One of the highlights of the conference were the frank and direct attacks on neighbouring countries by an undiplomatic Liberian lieutenant general — "Why do they arm the rebels?" — and the uncomfortable responses of diplomats from Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. And no conflict could better illustrate Mr Silva's point about "control of scarce resources", for each Liberian faction funds its war from rubber, diamonds, or timber.

"Implicit in conflict prevention is the involvement of civil society," Victoria Gardener of International Alert in London said: "It is not enough to promote dialogue between élites who dominate resources and access to the media. To promote real peace, you have to involve village associations, and especially women's associations. Women are the source of peace."

Mali's Dr Mariam Maiga agreed. "Women and children are the real victims of war. The mothers of our children are the victims of rape. The children themselves are brutalised by being exploited as assassins or cannon fodder." Mariam's Association of Women for the Safeguard of Peace was active in the peaceful resolution through civil society of the Malian Tuareg revolt.

The most amazing statistics came from General Henny van der Graaf, a UN peace-keeper. "The Western powers are spending $18,000 million in Bosnia. They spend $1 million per day on refugees in Zaire. We managed to stop a war in the Sahel, yet we cannot get them to give us just 1 per cent of the Bosnian money, which is all we need to resettle the ex-combatants and relaunch the battered economy. They will not invest in peace."

Another official commented drily: "We shall not have successful peace-making as long as the UN Security Council remains dominated by the world's five biggest arms exporters."

Letter from Switzerland Tavia Grant

Lessons in home economics

IN MY CLASS you can ask the women where they come from, but you don't ask what they're doing. It's the unwritten rule everyone follows.

Twelve of us meet every morning in Zurich to struggle through German vocabulary, grammar and comprehension. The women are mostly Latin American from Colombia, Cuba, Bolivia and Brazil. In my previous language course there were more Asian women. The same rules applied: ask about life at home, but not how or why they came here.

I remember Phitchayanan. She once told me, in a mix of Thai, German and English, about her Thai husband who beat her and drank excessively. She divorced him and came to Switzerland as a mail-order bride. She's happier here, she said, her new husband treats her better. But her eyes are still sad.

Take a walk through downtown Zurich and there are pictures of erotic, "exotic" show girls everywhere. In Switzerland's highest circulating tabloid, Blick, there are ads for phone sex, clubs, saunas and magazines. Out of the 10 photos, seven depict women of colour.

They come from Latin America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. In 1991, most foreign strippers came from the Dominican Republic, Brazil and Thailand, followed by Bulgaria and Morocco.

About 2,000 migrant women enter Switzerland each year under "artist" visas. This allows them to stay in the country and work for eight months. Legally, they can work as "entertainers" — strippers and night club dancers. Illegally they work as prostitutes. Countless more enter on a tourist visa. Officially, there are about 150 foreign sex workers in Zurich. Unofficially that number is much higher.

Other women come here as mail-order brides. International catalogues of available women are circulated throughout Europe so that men can select the most desirable, submissive and affectionate brides.

Sex tours abound. A Filipina friend once showed me a travel brochure for her country. Smiling, bikini-clad women posed in every photo. In the pictures the women are happy, flowers in their hair and cocktails in their hand. "Come to the Philippines," the photos say, "where everything is possible and the women anxiously await you."

When I ask my friend why she thinks men take these tours, she replies: "We are not white. They can distance themselves from us. We don't look like their sisters, wives, daughters or mothers. They can pretend we don't mind — they think we are different from them."

She tells me of the women in the countryside who are desperate to find a way out of the cycle of poverty. For them, European men are a ticket to freedom.

As I see couples — young foreign women with old, balding white men who don't even share a language in common — I question whether a relationship that begins on such an unequal footing can ever mature into a full partnership?

Many women come here with false illusions — employment agencies had promised they would work as waitresses. They had borrowed money to come, only to realise they are expected to strip to pay it back. They are left with little choice. They do some strip work, hoping to find a different job, but without speaking German and without having a work visa, all doors are closed.

Support organisations do exist in Zurich. But most women only use them when problems become insurmountable.

I have a friend from Cuba. She is in her 20s, her Swiss boyfriend in his 50s. He is a millionaire who owns 60 racehorses. She wants to marry him so she can legally stay in the country.

She works as a maid in the afternoons so she can send money to her family in Cuba. When I tell her I am married to a Swiss student, and that we have very little money, she snorts incredulously: "What! You've come all this way from Canada, and not even found a rich Swiss man? You may as well have stayed at home."

The problem is bigger than it first appears. Women come to Switzerland, one of the world's richest nations, because global inequalities leave little hope for the future in their own countries. And as long as the demand for "exotic" woman continues, there will be a ready supply.

Meanwhile, back in the class room, we don't speak of these harsh realities. We continue to conjugate verbs, make silly mistakes, and laugh together. But we still wonder to ourselves, "Is she? Is she? Or is she?"



Russian fishermen in the Caspian Sea haul in sturgeon with its precious black caviar PHOTOGRAPH: A REISER

Russians who would die for caviar

James Meek in Dagestan

KHASAN'S huge grey eyes are peaceful and good-humoured, set in a weatherbeaten, yellowed face creased by the permanent hint of a smile. But there is a very real danger of him being caught and arrested for caviar poaching, and more so that at any instant a ferocious Caspian Sea storm could smash his tiny boat and send him to his grave.

Khasan, aged 44, has been casting his nets for the increasingly endangered sturgeon for 20 years. The females in his catch are beaten over the head with a plank, their bellies slit open and the sticky grey skein of roe, or black caviar, lifted out.

"The sturgeon is a valuable fish," says Khasan simply. "Black caviar is like hard currency. So we make a roof for ourselves."

The "roof" is the protection from prosecution that hundreds of caviar poachers in Dagestan buy from corrupt officials. But that offers little protection from the caviar mafia, believed to have been behind a terrorist bomb attack in the Dagestani town of Kaspiysk last month which killed 67 people and destroyed a nine-storey block of flats. The commander of the locally-based border guard units, Valery Morozov, was among the dead.

Most of the victims were Russian border guards and their families. The guards, who patrol Russia's new boundaries, had begun to produce results in regulating illegal traffic and, in doing so, made dangerous enemies.

Khasan reeled off a list of local fishery protection organisations which could be bought off. "This isn't Russia," he said. "You know how it is here. There are few of them but they want more. You can't bribe them for 2 million roubles (about $300) but you can for 4 million."

BUT Dagestan *is* part of Russia and, unlike the regional fishery protection teams, the border guards are a federal service which is more or less run from Moscow. Although the guards are not immune to corruption themselves, they have cut the flow of contraband caviar considerably.

Poachers such as Khasan are small fry. He sells caviar from his house for 230,000 roubles (about $40) a kilo. The real money goes to the dealers who sell on the caviar to Moscow and abroad. Five 200g jars of Osyotr caviar — not the most expensive — retail at Fortnum & Masons in London for about $1,300.

In a crackdown on smuggling and poaching in the Caspian region, border guards seized 1.6 tonnes of contraband black caviar in the first quarter of the year. Fake waybills accompanying the cargo suggested that local customs officials were involved.

Massive poaching and uncontrolled "legal" fishing by the new Caspian states has drastically reduced sturgeon numbers. The World Wide Fund for Nature released a report in the week before the bombing warning that "with significant illegal trade, little regulation, tremendous profits and increasing demand, sturgeon species are perched precariously on the edge of extinction". There were 43.5 million adult sturgeon in the Caspian in 1994, compared with 142 million in 1978.

Last month the five Caspian nations signed an agreement to ban fishing for sturgeon in the open sea next year. Yet high unemployment and poverty in regions such as Dagestan will keep driving the poachers into the water.

"There's no danger of the sturgeon disappearing," said Khasan, looking out to where poaching boats lay half-hidden in the bushes. "But there are fewer of them. Certainly there are fewer."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

ALLEGRO, Astra, Capri, Cortina, Fiesta, Maxi, Viva. What is the marketing theory which dictates that British post-war cars have to have a name ending with a vowel?

MOST ITALIAN words end with a vowel. British car manufacturers use Italian names because they see it as an asset: we Italians make beautifully designed cars and are known to be racy drivers. — *Carla Levi Singh, Durham*

NONE. There are probably more names not ending in a vowel, eg Consul, Zenith, Zodiac, Corsair, Classic, Alpine, Imp, Minx, Hunter, Vanguard, Renown, Herald, Acclaim, Victor, Velox, Cambridge . . . — *Fred Brooks, Diss, Norfolk*

THE Chevrolet Nova has been a successful product in North America, but has sold poorly in Spanish-speaking countries, much to the chagrin of the marketing gurus at General Motors. "Nova", translated into Spanish, means "it doesn't go", which may explain the poor sales. — *Jonathan M. Winner, Abbotsford, BC, Canada*

A BOOK of herbal remedies warns against using rosemary if you have epilepsy or a heart condition. Is rosemary really so dangerous and, if so, why?

THE Herb Book has a caution that excessive amounts of rosemary taken internally can cause fatal poisoning. It notes that rosemary acts to raise blood pressure and improve circulation and so would affect those with heart conditions. Because of its potential to poison, rosemary is most often used externally, either added to a bath or applied as an ointment.

Redale's Illustrated Encyclopedia Of Herbs states that the flowers and leaves contain a volatile oil (an ingredient of rubefacient liniments) which is responsible for the plant's pharmacological actions. As a medicinal herb, rosemary should be used carefully because large quantities of the pure oil can irritate the stomach, intestines and kidneys. However, cooking with rosemary is perfectly safe. — *Joy Murphy, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire*

HAVE bombs ever resembled the cannonball with a fuse found in numerous cartoons?

YES. In the days when cannons fired balls, mortars fired bombs like those depicted in cartoons. I can't imagine that anyone ever threw one a safe distance, though. The bomb with pointed nose and tail fins is a modern development designed to be dropped from aircraft. — *Gerry Leach, Leicester*

SHOPPING trolleys taken from supermarket premises by customers litter streets worldwide. Will anybody ever think of a way to solve this problem?

AS STUDENTS are responsible for most thefts of trolleys (along with road signs, traffic lights etc), it would seem that the Government is committed to reducing the problem by simply eradicating students. — *Steve Harris, Hatfield, Hertfordshire*

Any answers?

IS THERE more justice or injustice in the world? — *Heiner Zok, Bremerhaven, Germany*

WHEN I was little and got stung by nettles, there were always dock leaves nearby. Nowadays, it is hard to find dock leaves anywhere. What's happened to them? — *Janie Downie, St Werburghs, Bristol*

APART from Summer Holiday, which is the worst song ever recorded? — *John Mathieson, Favell, Northampton*

A GOOGOL is 10^{100} (1 followed by 100 zeros). Can there possibly be a googol of anything in the universe? — *Ged Smith, Wootton, Liverpool*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. Readers with access to the Internet can respond to Notes & Queries via http://go2.guardian.co.uk/nq/

Proposals aplenty

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THREE proposals of marriage were on offer. An ample sufficiency unless you are Barbara Cartland, who had 56.

The one that came up from the floor, catching Rita on the chin, was from Fred ("I say everything twice. I say, I say everything twice") Elliott. Fred is a noisy oyster in the Coronation Street (ITV) hotpot. A master butcher, apt to press his suit with darkly dripping parcels. A warm man, the owner of three legs of Betty's Hotshot.

The landlord of the Rovers had fallen off Betty's Hotshot while having his picture took (do try to keep up) so Fred and Rita were sharing a packet of crisps in the hospital corridor. A shared potato can lead to unexpected intimacy. They fell to discussing fish and chips.

"Time were", roared Fred, "when they used to mek batter light and crisp so it melted in the mouth. Nowadays it's inch-thick and soggy everywhere you go. And do you know why?" "No, why?" "Industrial batter. It's mass-produced by the tankerload in Ipswich and shipped all over the country." Why, you wonder, why Ipswich?

Fred's proposal was touching. Lowering his voice to a shout, he said: "Would you . . . Can you find it in you . . . What I'm saying . . . Will yer marry me, Rita? I don't want an answer now. I'd rather you dwell on it." And, baring his teeth terrifyingly, he winked and he went.

You can be sure she'll dwell on it like a broody hen. This is a storyline on the point of lay (speaking chicken-wise, of course) and Coronation Street has an extra episode a week to fill.

In spite of looking like something hanging from a hook by its heels, Fred has his endearing side and I wouldn't care to predict the outcome. Rita's choice of husbands was always idiosyncratic, notably Alan — flattened by a Blackpool tram while chasing her with fell intent and a sharpened hatchet.

With one of those flashes of real insight which illuminate the Street, Kevin said recently: "Rita Sullivan's a good-looking woman with her own career and she spends her nights in the Rovers nursing a vodka and tonic." A little vignette of loneliness.

Meanwhile two parson's daughters slogged it out on opposing channels. How happy might I be with either, were t'other dear charmer away. As it was, the challenger, Anne Brontë, scored an unexpected victory over the champion, Jane Austen.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (BBC1) was thick with shadows and bunches of candles like the fingers of a corpse. Cursed with the cruellest hairdo since Medusa, Tara Fitzgerald as Helen burned with an icy light. A heroine to give a man frostbite. She seemed to inhabit a tomb. Shot from above, she and her dying husband looked as if they were lying in their grave. She fled to a wild place where limestone poked through thin soil like the knuckles of shallowly buried men. Everything breathed death.

It carried, perhaps to Anne Brontë's surprise, a feminist depth-charge. "The Lord God gave man dominion over every creeping, crawling thing that creeps and crawls upon the face of the earth . . . Ask your mother," said the rackety Huntingdon (Rupert Graves), daubing his little son's cheeks with blood.

And so to the proposal. "Would you", asked Helen's lover (the poor bloke was called Gilbert but I won't tell anybody), "give me your hand if I asked for it?" "How was it Dr Johnson described a second marriage? A triumph of hope over experience," she replied. Anne Brontë, it was all too clear, had never had a proposal of marriage and, being on the point of death, never would.

Now do me a ghost story for Christmas. Time were, as Fred would say, they used to mek grand ghost stories at Christmas.

Emma (ITV) was strikingly like an Agatha Christie story. It was full of misdirections and misunderstandings until, at last, the overlooked, the obvious, the only possible person was revealed. It moved in a seasonal curve from coaches at Christmas to the conker-bright rump of Mr Knightley's chestnut at harvest time.

The proposal itself was charmingly expanded from Jane Austen's teasing.

"What did she say? Just what she ought to, of course. A lady always does."



Stepping out . . . Page leads the way PHOTOGRAPH: LAURIE LEWIS

Ashley Page, the Royal Ballet's iconoclast, has broken the classical mould, discovers **Judith Mackrell**

The young ones

THE studio where the choreographer Ashley Page is rehearsing seems to be full of teenagers, their lankily graceful limbs swathed in a kind of innocence. In fact, the dozen or so dancers are in their early twenties, junior members of the Royal Ballet's corps de ballet.

They look gorgeous, yet a couple of them seem slightly alarmed by what their bodies are doing. This isn't surprising given that junior dancers' duty is to stay in line, not to push themselves to the front of the stage. Of course this is frustrating since the reason they want to dance is to get under the spotlight. But the combination of this reticence, and hunger that results, is something that fascinates Page. Though he's just turned 40, he can still remember what it's like to be "a desperate and anxious" kid. And it's this dramatic tension between young and old dancers that he exploits in his new work Two-Part Invention.

Page has created the whole of the first section on nine junior dancers — a wave of the wand for those who've never even had their names printed in the programme before. It is set to a score by Robert Moran, "32 Cryptograms for Derek Jarman" and it is geared to make the more compliant dancers take risks and generate power. Page has also deliberately taken the women off pointe in order get them to dance with even "more juice and physicality".

Page chose Moran's score — or says rather that "it jumped out" at him — because it "was obvious to dance to . . . it has the urgency of the best minimalist music". But for the other section of the piece he's used the much less obvious Prokofiev 5th Piano Concerto, because Two-Part Invention is a ballet of contrasts — of modern and classical, youth and experience. Part two is thus danced by older soloists and principals and its movement is, Page says, "more classical than anything I've done in a long while", with the women in tutus and pointe shoes.

It is this opposition between the earth-bound and the classically airy that gives Page a wide palette to work with. But he also says, "When I heard Moran's music it just said film to me". So he's had sections of the choreography filmed so that they can be shown with the live dancing, to add yet another layer of contrasts. This is typical of a choreographer who over the past 12 years has been putting ballet under pressure to see what new things it can reveal.

Though Page is a committed classicist — he loves the language of ballet — he has never taken it as he finds it. He sharpens and skews its lines, he re-works its syntax, fuses it with some of the qualities of modern dance and puts it in a recognisably modern world. Page represents the Royal's cutting edge — he is the company iconoclast. When Page entered the company, both Kenneth MacMillan and Frederick Ashton were still alive and traditions — and pieties — were more sternly maintained. (Anthony Dowell has recalled that as a junior in the 1960s he was forbidden to speak to senior dancers unless spoken to, and was expected to give way to any principal he met in the corridor.)

These days a more contemporary, democratic spirit reigns, but one result may be that young dancers are less plugged into the past and more impatient to dance ballets of their own era.

Some critics argue, however, that there are increasingly few new ballets worth dancing. This summer a symposium held at the South Bank in London suggested that ballet has become an exhausted form clutching on to its past glories, with only a tiny minority like Page maintaining a toehold in the present. Page violently disagrees that the form itself is passé.

"I certainly don't think that ballet is a dinosaur, not as long as there are intelligent people around who want to use the language. All the period classics are textbook stuff now, but they didn't start out that way and we won't stay like that now."

Family crosses cultural swords

THEATRE
Michael Billington

AYUB KHAN-DIN, whose East is East riotously occupies the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in London, is not the first writer to spot the dramatic possibilities in mixed Anglo-Pakistani parentage: Hanif Kureishi's early work is all about the painful aspects of cultural collision. What makes Khan-Din unusual is that he opts for exuberant comedy and views the subject from a historical perspective.

We are in Salford in 1970 at the time of incipient war between India and Pakistan. George Khan, a devout Muslim who came to England in 1930 and who runs a chip shop, is married to English Ella. The play is concerned partly with their warring relationship but even more with the fate of their six children, variously torn between patriarchal tradition and maternal freedom: in particular with Tariq and Abdul rebelling against an arranged marriage and with strange, solitary 12-year-old Sajit who has to undergo circumcision and who clings to his parka as if it too were a kind of foreskin.

What lifts the play off the ground is Khan-Din's hilariously accurate picture of family life. He shows the sundry divisions among the children, ranging from mockery of their tyrannical dad to, in one case, total adherence to his Islamic faith. He also captures the double standards of the immigrant traditionalist: in the play's most telling line Ella, expected to put up with domestic battery while helping with chip-shop battering, reminds her husband, "I'm a Muslim wife when it suits you." But, although Khan-Din unsparingly shows the cruelty of the old-style Pakistani patriarch, he makes his points through comedy: the eruption of family anarchy into a teatime meeting with a prospective father-in-law has a touch of Marx Brothers madness.

Khan-Din allows the issues to emerge through the characters; and he is much aided by Kristine Landon-Smith's lively production for the Tamasha Company. Nadim Sawalha as George utters monstrous sentiments in an off-hand, low-key manner, Linda Bassett is a model of fretful tolerance as Ella and there is fine support from Lesley Nichol as an undertaking neighbour and from Imran Ali as Sajit. Sold out at the Theatre Upstairs, the play moves to the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, on February 5: don't miss it.

Lyn Gardner writes: There is real magic at work. Primitive Science, a young company with a spiralling reputation, has taken some of the mysterious stories of Jorge Luis Borges and forged them into a brief, hallucinatory piece of theatre about the nature of obsession.

In a forgotten room of the library, whose ceiling is miraculously supported by a single column of books, the imperfect librarian, blind for 10 years, devours his books greedily. To the scratchy strains of an Enrico Caruso record he licks their pages, sniffs them, runs his teeth over them, a native of the world of alphabets who has been to Marco Polo's China and Shakespeare's England without ever leaving his ivory tower. He is a prisoner of his own all-embracing knowledge, the Peter Pan of the library who has never aged because he has never lived except through the printed page.

The brilliance of Marc von Henning's production of Imperfect Librarian at London's Young Vic is the way it dramatises the external and interior simultaneously. One actor portrays the bumbling physical reality of the librarian while another stands stock still a few feet away, his head cocked like a blind sparrow as he delivers an internal monologue of aching despair.

The librarian has had all the books in the world, rather as Casanova has had all the women, so when a stranger arrives offering "the book of infinite pages, the book of sand with neither a beginning nor an end" the librarian is unable to resist buying it.

It proves his downfall. The book he believes contains all knowledge we can see is made of glass. Destruction comes in a rush of music, the dying fall of a chord and the rattle of leaves on the glass roof like ghosts demanding to be let in.

The second half of this brief evening does not quite succeed in assaulting both senses and brain to such a degree. None the less, the story of the blocked poet who discovers that the pages he had thought he had filled are always blank ("A consequence of writing without conviction") has a delightful and pointed absurdist humour.

It is only afterwards that you realise that you are laughing at the futility of your own existence, lost, as we all are, in the labyrinth of our own self-deceiving obsessions.

Greece looks to European Union for return of Elgin marbles

WHEN Lord Elgin ordered workmen to remove a few "pieces of old stone" from the Parthenon in Athens in 1803, he could have had little idea he was igniting one of the modern world's longest running diplomatic rows, *write Luke Harding and Helena Smith*.

Last week, the Greek government renewed its campaign to get the priceless 2,430-year-old Elgin Marbles back from the British Museum, where they have been since 1816.

In an unexpected move, it announced it would step up its fight for the "exiled monuments" by raising the issue this month with its European Union partners.

The Department for National Heritage said the Government would "strenuously resist" their return. However, the Greek government — taking heart from the return of the Stone of Scone to Scotland — wants the frieze back by the end of the century.

But a British Museum spokesman said: "The trustees would regard it as a betrayal of their principles. It would set a precedent for the dismemberment of collections which recognise no arbitrary boundaries of time and place."

In a recent letter to John Major the British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles said: "You will be aware . . . these pieces were initially removed from [Turkish] occupied Greece by a Scot [Lord Elgin] . . . They are part of a temple that represents the Greek heritage to all Greeks and it is logical that they should be repatriated. You are also aware that the president of Greece has undertaken that Greece makes no other claims regarding the great quantity of Greek antiquities in the British collections."

But the 11th Lord Elgin, great-great-great-grandson of the 7th earl who took the sculptures in 1803, said: "The Greek authorities have allowed the sculptures left at the Parthenon to crumble into ruins . . . Were it not for the actions of my forebear there would be very little left."

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER



Freak out at the Factory

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

WHO shot Andy Warhol? You may find it difficult to recall. But not after Mary Harron's film, which has Valerie Solanas, the culprit, at its centre, played by Lili Taylor with what one can only describe as punch-drunk intensity.

Solanas, whose Scum Manifesto is regarded as an *echt* pre-feminist text, winkled her way into Warhol's Factory, was received as another amusing eccentric, and then became too tiresome for the flaccid master to manage. Thus rejected, she took a gun to the example of maleness who was once her fan and idol.

Was she mad, or were they? If anyone knows, Harron does. She researched the project minutely, and the result is a cross between documentary and fiction, immaculately dressed and with every detail of its oddball era in place.

If something's missing from this cornucopia, it's an exploration of the woman herself from any deep psychological perspective. You get her lesbian tendencies, her prostitution and her haranguing of passers-by.

You also get her rage at Warhol, nicely played by Jared Harris (Richard Harris's son), after he rejected her and her increasing sense of almost paranoid desperation which Taylor does particularly well.

But the film's painting of the scene itself, with all its attendant cultural baggage and sixties memorabilia, tends to deflect from its examination of this rather gloriously ridiculous woman. Well as Taylor displays her anger, humour and final disintegration, we want to know more about her, not less.

The film peeps at this extraordinary New York world, inhabited by so many who never survived it, with an innate sympathy and humour. But the jigsaw puzzle remains, as does the question mark over Warhol himself whose Factory seemed to encourage spaced-out freaks provided they didn't get in the way of the owner's remorseless pursuit of voyeuristic stimulation and money through art.

I Shot Andy Warhol is an intriguing, well-structured film which, if it lacks sufficient depth, at least suggests a complexity beneath its surface which, one day, someone else may illuminate with greater profundity.

It may, however, be less fun.

Since marrying Geena Davis, Finnish director Renny Harlin has worked the girl harder than a fond husband should. In Cut-Throat Island, she had to out-swashbuckle Burt Lancaster. In **The Long Kiss Goodnight**, she's a karate expert who makes Steven Seagal look effeminate. But neither film matches its ambitions to make her the first female action star of the nineties.

The saving grace of the film is not her but Samuel L Jackson who, come to think of it, is the better part of most films in which he appears.

He plays a down-at-heel detective, given to irony, who befriends an amnesiac small-town teacher with a young daughter. Someone's getting at her, but she doesn't know why. Actually, she was a top CIA assassin who once balked at the kill.

Jackson, given some of the more amusing lines, does his considerable best to provide a rounded character. Meanwhile Davis, as the harassed girl in question, slowly but surely regaining her memory, sweats blood in the cause of art.

Art, though, is scarcely the name of this game. It's more like highly professional, smartly polished artifice. We've seen it all before, and we'll see it all again. But that won't necessarily count against it.

Outsider steps in to win Turner prize

THE Turner Prize regained its capacity for surprise last week when video artist Douglas Gordon, the outsider, was given the £20,000 award, *writes Dan Glaister*.

The jury praised him for "his engagement with profound issues of meaning, psychological discipline and moral ambiguity". It noted his use of a "wide range of media with consistent intelligence and creative insight".

Gordon, aged 30, was asked what he would do with his prize money. "I will probably pay people in order not to get nominated for something," he said.

Gordon's victory represents a triumph for Glasgow, his home town. He was the only artist on the all-male shortlist from outside London: recent winners have all been London-based.

He gained attention for 24-Hour Psycho, a slowed-down version of the Hitchcock film. His work for the show includes Confessions Of A Justified Sinner, a slowed-down version of the 1932 film Dr Jekyll And Mr Hyde.

Another work, A Divided Self, is a two-part video shown simultaneously which shows two hands wrestling, one shaved, the other hairy.

"When I couldn't sleep as a child, I used to get into bed with my parents and watch TV with them . . . Film has been the common denominator for our generation," he has explained.

Future projects include a version of John Ford's 1956 western, The Searchers, slowed down to last five years, the period covered in the plot.

The other candidates were painter Gary Hume, photographer Craigie Horsfield, and conceptual artist Simon Patterson.

The sax man cometh

JAZZ
John Fordham

WHEN the 49-year-old Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek brings his band out, it is to a different response to the one that traditionally greets jazz giants. Because Garbarek, though a jazz musician in attitude and by association, is only marginally a jazz musician to his audiences, who don't care what category of hero he is.

Garbarek has used improvisation, and jazz's tolerance of a tonality impure by European classical music's standards, within a musical frame that doesn't bear much relationship to the African-American traditions of blues and street-corner swing. His world is empty of the loud traffic, of the urgent sexual negotiations and the New World tumult to which early jazz was a soundtrack. His is a music of an older Europe, of folk-dances, masques and funerals. But beneath its jig-like themes, jazz is still this music's driving force.

"You can apply any personal input coming from whatever part of the world," Garbarek has said, "and it's possible to find a way that will work in the jazz idiom."

Garbarek is as intelligent and quietly emotional a man as his music suggests, and in recent years he has enjoyed remarkable success for a jazz musician whose use of pop licks and funk rhythms is rarely more than a fleeting impression. He has an extraordinary saxophone timbre that often resembles an oboe, or an Eastern reed instrument like the nagaswaram, or even a cello, the sound of wind over ice. He has frequently worked with musicians outside jazz, including Indian and African players, and in 1994 his ECM record Officium, made with the British Hilliard vocal ensemble and splicing sax improvisations with the repertoire of plainsong and Gregorian chant, made the bestseller charts.

But recent visitors to Cambridge Corn Exchange and Festival Hall found a very different Garbarek — a more open and exuberant one, playing the varied programme from his current Visible World disc.

Garbarek once described the influence of his native folk music on his experience of American jazz: "The sound of the cattle-calls . . . isn't an interactive music like jazz, or an improvisational one, but it is a music of space, a backdrop I could move against, and a lot of jazz sounds very cluttered to me."

After the Cambridge concert he expanded on it. "I didn't mean the jazz of Louis Armstrong or Errol Garner, for instance, but what happened after bebop when all the instruments were supposed to be 'liberated', including the drums and bass, so it sounded as if everybody was soloing at the same time. Now I try to balance composition and improvisation . . . If everything is floating, then some nights you will get a fantastic concert and sometimes not so fantastic. The way we work now is loose, but it's consistent."

GARBAREK'S current tour draws together elements from his most spacy and desolate individual odysseys, and his most communicative and accessible work. It's a two-hour show without an interval, but as he has frequently surprised regular listeners to his records before, this favourite Garbarek roadband (Rainer Bruninghaus, keys; Eberhard Weber, bass; Marilyn Mazur, percussion) sounds a great deal more urgent than the discs do.

The quartet is the central strand of his music, and through a succession of gentle dances, bursts of swing and stately folk-song, Garbarek reaffirms a steadily shifting evolution. Marilyn Mazur, an ex-Miles Davis percussionist, gave an astonishing display, shadowing the leader's tingling deliberations with glancing cymbal touches, presaging dramatic episodes with gong-sounds like rain on a roof, always on her feet in the midst of a vast kit that she patrols with nimble trepidation, as if barefoot on pebbles.

Visible World is out on the ECM label

Last of the Tory gentlemen

Julian Critchley

Alec Douglas-Home
by D R Thorne
Sinclair-Stevenson 469pp £25

Anthony Eden: A Life and Reputation
by David Dutton
Arnold 481pp £25

ANTHONY EDEN and Alec Douglas-Home were the last two gentlemen to lead the Tory party. They were both aristos, while Harold Macmillan, the grandson of a crofter who married into the Devonshires, was upper middle class.

I saw Eden once only. As a Hampstead Young Conservative I had marched with banners through the streets of Hammersmith at the 1948 byelection. As a reward for our efforts, Central Office had booked the Hammersmith Palais, and we danced the night away only to be interrupted by Eden, then the deputy leader of the party, who "said a few words". His accent was 1930s-languid, and I cannot recall what it was he said. He struck me then as being brittle, handsome and *fin de race*.

On the other hand I was a Tory backbencher when Alec became Prime Minister in 1963. I saw him leave the Carlton Club and walk up St James's to Piccadilly. As he did so men raised their hats to the Prime Minister, a gesture to which Alec responded in kind. In 1964 men still wore hats, and security as we have come to know it was non-existent.

Since Alec's leadership of the party, the social backgrounds of Tory leaders have changed from grandee to what some might claim to be the inverted snobbery of John Major, the Boy from Brixton. What influence this has had upon the composition, attitudes and reflexes of the Tory party would make a subject for a book in itself.

Eden's premiership ended in tears. Sickness, the bungling of American surgeons, and his highly strung, nervous temperament led him first into the ill-advised Suez operation and then into early retirement. The Tory party has always been kinder to Alec Douglas-Home.

They both enjoyed the sponsorship of people greater than themselves. Eden was the favourite of the all-powerful warlord, Winston Churchill. Always the bridesmaid, he barely became the bride, a reluctant Churchill coming to the conclusion that "Anthony wasn't up to it".

Alec Douglas-Home, then Lord Home, Neville Chamberlain's Parliamentary Private Secretary at the time of Munich, benefited from the failure of Lord Hailsham to carry the party with him at the 1963 Blackpool Tory conference. Quintin had been Macmillan's first choice to succeed him. When he saw that his horse would not run, he transferred his affections, not to R A Butler, whom he despised, but to a relatively unknown peer of the realm.

The fact that both Anthony and Alec belong to the *deuxième cru* of Tory leaders makes it hard to reach a conclusion as to which of them was the more distinguished. Anthony Eden was at the height of his fame when Foreign Secretary before the war, and his stand against appeasement was both right and courageous.

Alec Douglas-Home, on the other hand, was most comfortable as Foreign Secretary in the Heath government. He was always struggling to overcome the handicap of a Great House on the Borders and his disarming reference to the use of matchsticks to solve complex economic problems did him no good with an electorate in love with the "white heat of technology".

Parliament is a bitchy place yet I never remember having heard a harsh word said against Alec. I doubt very much if Eden ever enjoyed such affection. The appeasers never forgave him for his resignation, and his impatience, pique and slightly feminine manner did not endear him to the electorate.

Dutton and Thorne have both written major books of scholarship which deserve to become standard works. It is as difficult to choose between them as it is to come to a definite conclusion as to their subjects.

Sir Julian Critchley is the Conservative MP for Aldershot

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Head Over Heels, by Suzanne Moore (Viking, £13)

"*AS [PRINCE]* Charles rambles around . . . I come over all Yosser Hughes, 'Gissa job. I could do that. I could'," and people often think the same about newspaper columnists, that banging on about the first thing that comes into their heads is easy. But it isn't. And while Moore sometimes slips, infuriates, most of the time she does the job wonderfully. She marries passion and understanding, going right to the heart of an issue. Ever felt woolly on the question of royalty? "In a country in which it is now debatable whether we fund hospitals, we are expected to fund a monarchy out of nothing more than sympathy." Feeling woolly now? Get your opinions here.

The Faber Book of Pop, ed Hanif Kureishi and Jon Savage (£14.99)

ENORMOUS (800 pages, not counting index) volume of writings about pop, from Malcolm X's zoot suits to Andrew O'Hagan's depressing and acute look at the post-rave scene in Scotland. The book is largely composed of longer pieces — an average length of about 3,000 words — so what we are in fact getting is the Faber Very Un-Poppy Book of Pop. You can imagine Savage and Kureishi throwing out anything that might have been funny — none of Danny Baker's hilarious singles reviews (I mean it: he was a superb pop critic). Instead we get Tony Parsons writing, in 1977, "Mick Jones is a rock equivalent to a kamikaze pilot. All or nothing." Yeah, right. So, a book which aspires to the condition of museum exhibit, or catalogue; certainly worth a stroll around, but as for capturing the spirit or essence of pop: forget it.

The Selected Letters of Lewis Carroll, ed Morton N Cohen (Papermac, £12)

THREE hundred pages, but a tiny selection. Most of them to young girls, asking to see them alone; it makes one wonder whether we can be as squeamish and prurient as the Victorians when we put our minds to it. To an artist: "I do not admire naked boys in pictures. They always seem to me to need clothes: whereas one hardly sees why the lovely forms of girls should ever be covered up!" Er, quite.

Chomsky for Beginners, by John Maher and Judy Groves (Icon, £8.99)

NOT BAD, considering some of the illustrations are snaps of Maher and Chomsky with speech-bubbles. Covers both the great man's linguistics and politics, and should set one off in search of the right texts. I once heard that the "ch" in "Chomsky" is pronounced like the "ch" of "chutzpah". Is this true, or a lie spread by the military-industrial complex?

Sleepless nights in the Alps

Valentine Cunningham

Brother of Sleep
by Robert Schneider
translated by Shaun Whiteside
The Overlook Press 215pp £9 99

ROBERT SCHNEIDER'S astonishing debut is a piece of modern gothic that is gloriously weird. With an eye for the best alpine grotesquerie, Schneider plunges us into a sordid Germanic scene of gargoyle peasantry, cretinous births and monstrous lusts, where God and Satan are brooding forces for evil and terrible Catholic priests goad a fanatic people to violent and inflammatory acts.

Startling even for this abode of black abnormality is the illegitimate son of the parish curate and a farmer's demented spouse, the musical genius called Elias Adler.

Evidently a distant cousin of Günter Grass's dwarfish tin-drummer, Elias Adler can hear people's heartbeats and snow falling. He has conversations with stones and animals. He is in tune with the cosmos.

Yet he cannot bring himself to confess his love for his cousin Elsbeth, and so loses her to the pushier Lukas. Hence his quarrel with God — who appears to him as an argumentative and navel-less boy.

But still Elias loves and heals the old church organ and comes to play it with eerie finesse, and when Bruno Goller, the cathedral organist from nearby Feldberg, introduces this ragged-trousered wonder into the annual organ competition, Elias brings all heaven before the congregation's eyes and ears. But no Elsbeth, no joy for him; and he effects his own death by refusing to sleep.

Brother Of Sleep makes an astounding modern fairy tale of thwarted love whose ravishingly awful blackness is heightened by a steady accumulation of other casually freakish vignettes, such as the story of how Feldberg city got rid of a plague of cats by throwing them in baskets from a Babel-like tower.

Readers of Michel Foucault, say, or the historian Robert Darnton, will recognise where the puppeteer Schneider got his props basket. He fishes in it with all the dark-minded deftness of a Peter Handke, or, for that matter, an Angela Carter.

Brother Of Sleep is a meditation on the wiles, the vulnerabilities and the potential for mishap of the human body. Elias contrives to stay awake by shoving deadly nightshade leaves up his bottom. Mad, his mother pastes her pudenda with mud. Flesh carbonises in yet one more village conflagration. A child's brains are dashed out in a panic rush from the church, teeth scattering across the floor. Blood sprays from damaged eyes, bones crack, fungal parasites consume tissue.

Time and again, as when Elias tunes in to the "mad tohubohu" of the body noises of his neighbours — "an incredible noise of swallowing, gurgling, snorting, and belching, a churning of gall-like stomach juices, a quiet splash of urine, a swish of human hair, a thin singing of evaporated sweat, a whetting of muscles, a screaming of blood when the members of animals and men grew erect" — you realise you're attending a quite virtuoso performance of what we might call our end-of-century necro somatic pathos.

It's only natural that this novel should have carried off prizes, the Robert Musil Prize in Vienna, the Prix de Medici for the best novel in French translation. They order these things better in France — where you can see the great film version of J G Ballard's novel Crash in every village hall. In Britain we must make do with Schneider's rural supplement to Ballard's fantasy of an urban sexual dystopia. But it's a very splendid substitute to be going on with.

Head-on collision

Will Self

Crash
by J G Ballard
Vintage 224pp £5.99

Crash (screenplay)
by David Cronenberg
Faber 66pp £7.99

THE TENDENCY to publish film scripts as if they were literary properties, with a life of their own, has accelerated to such an extent that we can now read David Cronenberg's scripted adaptation of J G Ballard's novel Crash before we can see the film itself.

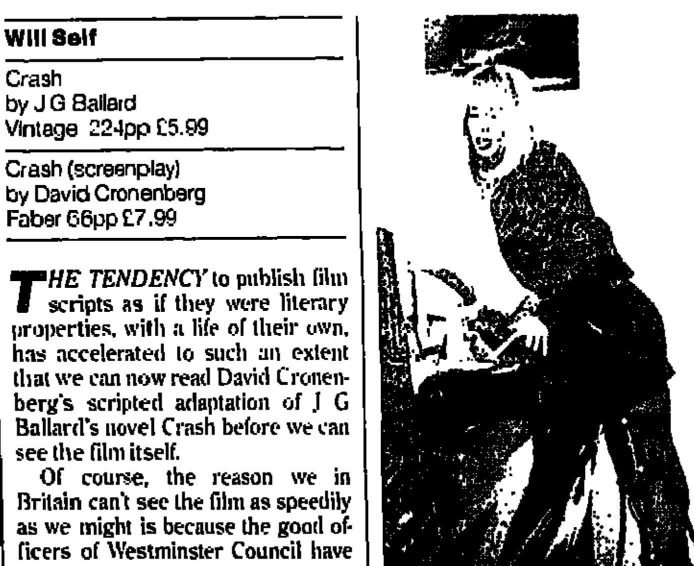
Of course, the reason we in Britain can't see the film as speedily as we might is because the good officers of Westminster Council have seen fit to try to prevent us.

In a way this slow coming of the film is a fitting climax to what was always a highly problematic cinematic property. I, like many others, had felt Ballard's novel was inherently unfilmable. Indeed, its very unfilmability seemed at least part of the reason why it had to be the greatest post-war, avant-garde British novel. That noted, I also thought it would make, potentially, a tremendous film.

It's often said that film adaptations of favourite books seldom live up to one's conception of what they should be like, and in doing so don't even engender a reasonable response. When I heard that Ballard himself regarded Cronenberg's film as "extreme", I knew it must be good. But having seen it, I can tell you that it's better than good — it's arguably great.

Cronenberg has taken the essence of Crash and boiled it down to a sharp, hard residuum, a bitter stock. His Crash, in contrast to Ballard's, introduces a more seductive plausibility to the idea of the car crash as a sexual aid by shifting the bias of the relationships between the characters.

Thus the protagonist, James Ballard (a bizarre piece of identification on the novelist's part), and his wife become in thrall to a conspiracy of perverts. Their aim is to re-enact car crashes and to glorify their own death of affect, nullity of feeling.




David Cronenberg's Crash is a work of art in its own right

As the film is concerned entirely with exploring this psychopathology of an imaginary near future, it's entirely suitable that the narrative should be carried forwards by a series of sex scenes. Almost all of the film's main characters copulate with one another; as they do so they meditate on the metallic consummations they so desire.

Cronenberg has put much of Ballard's superlative descriptions of contorted and macerated machinery into his considerably more economical directions. The dialogue looks pretty flat on the page — but then it's meant to be. Flat and unfeeling. He has also invented at least one shocking conceit of his own: the scene involving Jim Ballard penetrating the wound scar on a young woman's thigh (at her own behest!).

For those who haven't seen the film and want to picture what it might be like, go back to the original text — the film adaptation is of such a high quality that it is a work of art in its own right. We should be very angry with the confederacy of dunces who try to keep it off British screens because the truth it contains is unpalatable to them.

Out in the cold

Kevin Toolis

Stalin's Spy
by Robert Whymant
I B Taurus 368pp £25

IN THE first hours of the 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union, Red Army spy Richard Sorge phoned the German ambassador to Japan from a Tokyo hotel lobby to scream drunken obscenities about Hitler. Like Stalin's Englishman Guy Burgess, Sorge often wore his Comintern heart on his sleeve, but such was Sorge's captivating charisma that these outward signs of his treachery were dismissed as harmless aberrations.

Sorge, of Russian-German extraction, was one of the most successful spies of the 20th century, a communist agent who wheedled his way into the heart of the German embassy in Japan and relayed the secrets of the German High Command back to his masters in Moscow.

In his penetrating biography, Robert Whymant, a long-time foreign correspondent in Japan, delves into the nether regions of human betrayal to recover the man from the myth. Despite Whymant's access to the hitherto unpublished Russian archives, it is no mean task.

Sorge was a womaniser, a drunkard, a crippled war veteran who had little compunction about using Moscow's gold to keep his mistress in style. His success lay in his smooth-tongued ability to penetrate the heart of the German embassy in Tokyo by becoming the ambassador's closest confidant and, at one stage, his wife's lover.

When not cuckolding the husbands of the German community, Sorge was carousing in brothels with military attachés, swapping war stories or covertly photographing the top-secret German codes and ciphers they willingly entrusted to him. Sorge had bewitching charm and inspired absolute trust in those whom he despised.

His successes and sacrifices in xenophobic Japan meant little to his master, Stalin, who liquidated all of Sorge's contemporaries in Moscow and sought to recall Sorge to the Soviet Union to murder him, too. The wily Sorge resisted his recall until the political wind from Moscow changed, but the memory of the imperious, murderous demands of his masters could hardly have bolstered his sense of mission. Indeed, the strain of nearly a decade of espionage in the inhospitable posting of prewar Japan brought him to the brink of a nervous breakdown.

Ironically, Sorge's greatest triumph — obtaining the exact date of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Operation Barbarossa, three weeks in advance — was summarily dismissed in Moscow as unreliable. A few weeks later, with German panzers on the outskirts of Moscow, Stalin was sufficiently impressed with the accuracy of Sorge's espionage to read his cables personally.

Inevitably, Sorge's powers of illusion in Japan faltered and the spy ring was uncovered. The Japanese were astonished that the ambassador, Eugen Ott, remained in his post for more than a year after Sorge's capture. In Japanese eyes, the Nazi diplomat's closest confidant had been spying for an enemy of Japan, yet Berlin treated this as a minor incident. It was hardly convincing proof of Hitler's good faith towards his distant Axis ally.

To his interrogators, Sorge played up his importance to the Soviet High Command, and his value as a potential trade in a spy exchange. His information had indeed been conveyed to the highest level, and acted upon. But, as Whymant reveals, much of Sorge's intelligence, obtained at such risk, was discarded amid the madness of Stalin's endless purges.

In the end, there was no exchange, and Moscow, through its envoys in Japan, did nothing to save its greatest spy. On a cold November morning in 1944, after he had spent three years in prison, Sorge's executioners came to his cell in Tokyo and hanged him. One wonders what he would have made of this final betrayal by Stalin.

In death, Sorge became the tool of cold war red-baiters who cited him as another example of the all-pervasive Comintern conspiracy, forgetting that his intelligence helped defeat Hitler, the common enemy. Nearly 20 years later, Sorge's gravestone was inscribed: "Hero of the Soviet Union". Not much of an epitaph for a good man in a bad time.



Good man in a bad time . . . Sorge's gravestone is inscribed 'Hero of the Soviet Union' — but Stalin still tried to have him killed

Mummies' boys

Lorna Sage

Sons and Mothers
edited by Victoria and Matthew Glendinning
Virago 262pp £16.99

THIS motley collection of sons on mothers and mothers on sons achieved a lot of advance notoriety when the piece by journalist Jon Snow provoked a letter of public rebuke to the newspapers from his brother: "I cannot see how anything in his childhood can now justify the humiliation of our mother." Nicci Gerrard, contemplating the way "this homesickness has grown into a new and seductive literary genre", was moved to ask: "Who would want a writer for a son?"

But the question to ask is rather: Can you make art out of this painful stuff? Of the 16 pieces in the book, only Adam Mars-Jones's marvellous "Blind Bitter Happiness" manages it. Mars-Jones's mother Sheila is still very much around, but his Sheila is a fictional character, with him inside pulling the strings. This is how he writes about Sheila's near-fatal accident in middle age, when she was run over outside Moorfields Hospital:

"Of all the professionals through whose hands she passed that afternoon, it is only the ambulancemen who emerge with any credit as diagnosticians. They at least realised that this was a woman who wouldn't be in good shape any time soon, and wouldn't be asking any awkward questions about the disappearance of her earrings."

Mars-Jones projects himself back into the past like a witty guardian angel, always on Sheila's side. He fairly obviously identifies with her problems in being married to his father Bill, the High Court Judge, a man full of patriarchal certitudes.

The childhood unhappiness and blame that filled clever Sheila with such self-doubt that all her life "anyone who wanted to make her feel stupid could do so" is never undervalued, but she comes over as a stoic comedian. Mars-Jones doesn't write at all about himself, but in a sense he does nothing else, since he's psychically cross-dressing, entering into his mother's life at every turn. What's moving about this is the trouble he has gone to to try and invent her life, the work he's put into making it up and making it real for himself and us. But we're left in no doubt, at the same time, that Sheila is the last person who'd ever have presented herself this way.

In fact, Mars-Jones and Snow are saying almost exactly the same thing about their early upbringing — that their mothers failed to protect them against the alienations of middle-class, public-school, father-dominated childhoods. The great difference lies in the fact that Mars-Jones gets his revenge by writing his mother into the centre of the story, whereas Snow is really, all the time, writing about his father.

The problem with the mothers is that, with the exceptions of Jan Dalley and Kate Saunders, they come over as sycophantic. Dalley writes with fairness and feeling about her needy, restless boy, the twin who was born second. Saunders, a gifted novelist on a better day, sounds split down the middle like an amoeba, crazy with adoration of her tyrannous toddler, and watching herself drown in sentiment, surfacing now and again, clinging to a wry truism like a life-belt.

This book is available at the special discount price of £12.99 from Books@Guardian Weekly

Enjoying the weakness of the flesh

Ra Page

The Lady with the Laptop
by Clive Sinclair
Picador 183pp £12.99

GALLOWS humour has always elevated Clive Sinclair's work, invigorating his most disturbing undertones with the aesthetic of surprise. In this collection of stories, his smirking natural irony is, for the first time, a consistently benevolent force, undermining prejudice, cultural division and paranoia.

Employing a variety of narrators — from a Mexican tour guide to a reluctant Egyptian translator — Sinclair puts together cultural antagonists to assess the strength of their hostilities. Although prejudice is internalised, it isn't buried deep. Physical danger is all that's needed to lance it, producing unexpected acts of compassion and heroism.

Sinclair is a master of the fickle-fated twist — a female delegate to a conference on population control is the victim of unreliable contraceptives; a sculptor's model lives out the tragedy she once posed for . . .

As the stories get shorter, this narrative irony is replaced by layered subversions of metaphor and symbolism. The infertility of an English couple embroiled in the baby-trade is a device for addressing cultural theft; the Hoover is elevated to a phallic emblem of post-feminist capitulation. In "My CV", police interest in a graduate's car, a 2CV, reopens an old paranoia about his background — his CV.

This obsession with symbols and wordplay can sometimes become too much. But Sinclair's stories amount to much more than just their metaphoric pivots: the author feasts on the flavours of each disparate personality with a remarkable possession of voice. Linked by minor characters that reappear as narrators, these stories orbit one theme: the importance of cultural diversity. This political and genetic need to "mix" lends itself perfectly to Sinclair's visual enjoyment of the flesh and the procreative act: "I entered Indo-China in the manner prescribed by Il Papa."

His ongoing fascination with "the weakness of the flesh" is put in a wider context, deployed as a literary tool rather than a literary hang-up.

"I turn all abstractions into flesh and stone," Sinclair once wrote, and his sane Jewish characters generally abandon the "Jerusalem" of ancient dreams, preferring the limestone version with all its compromises. In an allegory for the Arab-Israeli conflict, Sinclair bravely compares the immaculate isolation of an ideal Promised Land with the pristine but stagnant gene pool that Fascism aspired to. But he is generally cautious not to offend his Jewish readership, and in the closing story plunders the Book of Genesis for a biogenetic parable for his philosophy. The Lady With The Laptop confirms him as a great observer of both the Jewish diaspora and the instability of any cultural identity.

Road warriors dig in deep

Paul Evans

ON TOP OF rolling Devon hills are a group of forts. From within these fortified settlements the inhabitants can look out over their land, an ancient patchwork of woods, fields and water meadows, a land they have vowed to protect. But this is not an archaeological flight of fancy. This is now. There are benders, tents, tree houses and each camp has a warren of tunnels.

The hillforts above Ottery St Mary, in the beautiful rich countryside east of Exeter, are part of the longest running road protest in England. The inhabitants are here to protect this land from an extension of the A30. The local arguments for the road are all about reducing travel time and congestion and making the existing roads in the area safer. But despite proposals which will solve these local problems without building a huge new road and destroying countryside there is a much more powerful agenda driving the construction of the A30 extension: it represents a small section of the pan-European road network which links Athens with Belfast, Madrid with Glasgow.

When it is built, the road will smash through woods and copses, shear through rolling hills and be carried across water meadows with ancient Saxon burial grounds on huge concrete pillars. It's hard to imagine a more devastating testimony to 20th century folly.

But built it will be. As part of some dark, Kafkaesque plot, the road has got through all the planning stages, the public inquiry and the opposition. All that stands in its way are the courage and determination of a group of people who are prepared to go to heroic lengths to hold up its construction.

Some of the protesters are veterans of the British roads programme. Many have been here since it began two or three years ago. Previous battles have honed their skills to a fine art and, despite many defeats, their resolve has been strengthened. Until the passing of the Criminal Justice Act, this form of peaceful protest was perfectly legal, but now the road protesters are outlawed. They have been served with notices of eviction from their camps. It could happen any day now.



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Like Celts facing the road-building Romans, the protesters are prepared for a siege. Unlike their ancient counterparts the people in the camps are committed to peaceful resistance. They will lock themselves up trees and burrow down tunnels to delay the road builders. At the Fairmile camp I went down into the Bunker. The only way into a tiny "room" with a bed, a store of provisions and a sound system was by wriggling through a tiny hole in a concrete block and descending a ladder 15ft into complete darkness.

But this is luxury. At Fort Trollheim I saw the Well, a concrete shaft sunk 10ft into the muddy ground. I heard about the Worm, a tunnel where only a skinny person can wriggle through with one arm extended.

There is no shortage of volunteers to go down these tunnels and fix themselves to concrete points. Any machinery passing overhead would collapse the fragile network of tunnels. This is the sort of risk the protesters face. This is what non-violent direct action means in Britain today.

These tunnels could not be a more immediate or graphic illustration of the connection between the protesters and the land they love. The courage, ingenuity and irrepressible sense of humour of the people in the hillforts is a lesson for our times learnt thousands of years ago.

Chess Leonard Barden

BRITISH teams have a poor record in the European Club Cup, the annual six-a-side knock-out dominated by ex-Soviet squads. We have a sorry history of first-round eliminations, in contrast to the world chess Olympiad, where England has been the main Western challenger to the Russians.

EuroCup 96 was expected to be different. Slough's chess sponsor Nigel Johnson assembled an strong cast of grandmasters via the UK Four Nations League, which the Berkshire players won in style. Meanwhile the Barbican got backing from the Corporation of London to host a weekend group which qualified two teams for this month's final in Hungary.

Then the problems began. Slough's chances shrunk when three of the original top boards opted to play for continental teams, and top board Tony Miles fell ill before the qualifier. Barbican and Guildford were both crushed in the first round of the Barbican group.

Adams and Hodgson were playing for the semi-finalists Panfox Breda, so there was still home interest for spectators; but the Dutch champions lost narrowly to Russia's all-GM squad.

Adams v Dautov

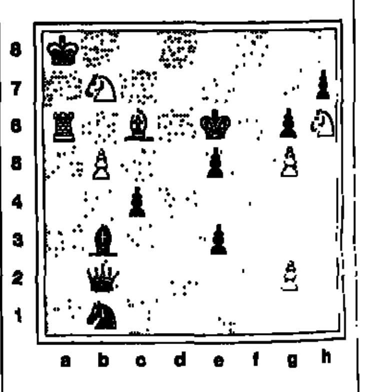
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 d3 d6 5 0-0 g6 6 c3 Bg7 7 Nbd2 0-0 8 Re1 Bd7 9 Nf1 Nh5 10 h3 h6 11 a4 a6 12 Bc4 Be6 13 Ne3 Bxc4 14 dxc4 Nf4 15 Nd5 Ne6 16 a5 f5 17 b4 Rf7 18 Ra2 Kh7 19 Rd2 Qe8 20 exf5 gxf5 21 Nh4 e4 22 f4 Ne7 23 Rde2 Nxd5 24 cxd5 Nf8 25 Qc2 Qd7 26 g4 fxg4 27 Rxe4 Kh8 28 f5 gxh3 29 Re6 Bf6 30 Ng6+ Nxg6 31 fxg6 Rg8 32 Kh1 Re7 33 Bxh6 Be5 34 Rxe7 Qxe7 35 Qf5 Qf6 36 g7+ Rxg7 37 Bxg7+ Kxg7 38 Rg1+ Kf8 39 Qc8+ Resigns.

Over in Bratislava, Slough's enfeebled team won its first match, but lost the semi-final to Partisan Belgrade. You can prepare for much in chess, but Slough had forgotten the peculiar chessmen sometimes used in eastern European events, where an eye trained on standard Staunton pattern pieces finds it hard to distinguish between queens, kings, and bishops. Add a touch of gamesmanship (Partisan delayed revealing its team order to stymie the English computer preparation), and even the current leader of the UK £3,000 Leigh Grand Prix comes unstuck.

Ilin v Arkell

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Bb4+ 4 Bd2 Qe7 5 g3 Nc6 6 Bg2 Bxd2+ 7 Nbxd2 d6 8 0-0 a5 9 e4 e5 10 d5 Nb8 11 Ne1 b5 12 Nef3 Bg4 13 Qb3 b6 14 Qe3 Bxf3 15 Nxf3 Nbd7 16 Nh4 Ng4 17 Qe2 g6 18 Bh3 Ndf6 19 f3 Nh6 20 Qd2 Kf8 21 Rae1 Kg7 22 f4 exf4 23 gxf4 Nxe4 24 Qd4+ Kh7 25 Nf3 Resigns. If f5 26 Rxe4 fxe4 27 Ng5+ Kg8 28 Be6+ wins.

No 2450



White mates in three moves, against any defence (by V Marin). A tough nut this week, which defeated most competitors at a world solving championship.

No 2449: 1 . . . Raf2+ 2 Ke1 Rh2! 3 Rd5 Ra2! with the winning threats Ra1+ and Rh1+.

Quick crossword no. 343

Across

1 Side opposite right angle (10)
7 Family treasure (8)
8 Adhesive (4)
9 Type of lily (4)
10 Glaringly obvious (7)
12 Authorise automatically (6-5)
14 Sink — for coal? (7)
16 Piece of hair or cloud (4)
19 Worry (4)
20 Without knowing about it (8)
21 It is shot from a trap (4,6)

Down

1 Carnivore (5)
2 Agitate (7)
3 Between walk and canter (4)
4 Anonymous (8)
5 Vision or spectacle (5)
6 Root vegetable (6)
11 Green-eyed monster (8)
12 Account of events — best so far! (6)
13 Enliven or make cartoon of (7)
15 Complete (5)
17 Song of praise (5)
18 Surrealist painter (4)

Last week's solution

■FAVOURITESON
M■P■U■E■E■T■I
ARRAS■VALIANT
I■I■T■E■E■I■R
TAOK■KANGAROO
R■O■T■L■R■■■B
ENTIRE■WARBLE
D■■■E■C■M■L■N
HIAWATHA■SUEZ
O■L■T■I■A■B■E
TUITION■GABON
E■B■E■T■R■E■E
LAISSEZFAIRE■

Bridge Zia Mahmood

MY RECENT article on disasters prompted a surge of sympathetic letters, many with their own tales of woe. There was the Canadian international who told me of a tournament on the cruise liner Canberra that he lost when his opponent bid a slam on the very last deal.

And I could not help but sympathise with the gentleman who told me that he was known as "Fingers Malone" until one fateful day in Chicago when he made a grand slam on a backwash squeeze. Unfortunately, his opponent was Al Capone, who showed his appreciation by arranging for Fingers' nickname to undergo a slight alteration. The letter was signed "Four-Fingers Malone"!

But the story that struck me where it hurts was this: "For the first time," the letter began, "I can reveal to the world the real cause of my wife's alienation and the disastrous consequences that it had. I was South on this deal:

♠9832 ♥AK763 ♦AKQ4 ♣None

"My partner opened the bidding with 3NT, showing a long solid minor suit — obviously clubs. My right-hand opponent doubled, and I started to think. Obviously East's double was based on a long, solid suit of his own, which had to be spades. To pass would clearly be disastrous, but there was a fair chance that my partner had short spades. So I took a gamble and jumped to six clubs! Even if the opponents could cash two or three spade tricks, West would have to find the right lead — and since West was my wife, I estimated the chances of that as close to zero, of course.

"Rather to my surprise, my wife doubled six clubs, so of course I redoubled when it came around to me. This was the full deal (see table).

"Lorena had doubled because she thought that East was on lead, so her double was the Lightner variety, asking for a spade lead which she would ruff. East would have led a spade anyway, but because it was I who had become declarer, Lorena was on lead and she didn't have a spade! So she led the jack of hearts, and I claimed 13 tricks — six clubs redoubled with an overtrick.

"She started spitting and cursing, claiming how lucky it was that I had bid a slam with a void as declarer. I made the worst mistake of my life by pointing out how clever my bid had been in severing the opponents' communications. 'A Scissors Coup

	North	
	♠764	
	♥Q5	
	♦7	
	♣AKQJ1095	
West		East
♠None		♠AKQJ105
♥J10984		♥2
♦108653		♦J92
♣874		♣632
	South	
	♠9832	
	♥AK763	
	♦AKQ4	
	♣None	

South	West	North	East
		3NT	Dble
6♣	Dble	No	No
R'dble	No	No	No

in the auction, you could call it!' I said mockingly.

"There was a silence, and Lorena appeared to have been struck by divine inspiration. The rest is history, of course, and the retribution she devised has gone down in the annals as the worst crime against partner ever committed. But I still think I bid the hand well — don't you?

"Yours sincerely, John Wayne Bobbitt."

Rugby Union Tour match: England 19 New Zealand Barbarians 34

Setback is not quite all black

Robert Armstrong
at Twickenham

NO ONE need get into a lather of displeasure over England's four-try defeat by the New Zealand Barbarians in a contest of rare intensity and no little flair. Argentina, England's opponents at Twickenham later this month, may well experience the backlash of their hosts' palpable frustration at staying in close touch for an exhilarating 70 minutes and then allowing the New Zealanders to take them apart with ruthless precision in the closing stages.

England's inexperienced young side, which included eight players with a handful of caps, were up against an outfit who have beaten every major side in the world within the past 13 months. Sure, this was another salutary rugby lesson from a southern-hemisphere team — last season South Africa dished out the medicine — but the real surprise this time was that Phil de Glanville's fiery battlers held a 19-13 lead after almost an hour's play.

Second-half tries by Sleightholme and Stimpson, who had a marvellous game, underlined England's bold commitment to attacking the New Zealand line through the backs as well as the forwards, among whom Johnson and Sheasby were outstanding. Had Catt and Gomarsall not periodically kicked away possession, additional scores might have accrued in the opening half-hour when England were in their pomp.

The true test of England's creative development will come next year when the full New Zealand side return to play two internationals at Twickenham. By that stage many of the England team should be streetwise and battle-hardened, having taken part in a Lions tour to South Africa. In the meantime the coach Jack Rowell must keep his nerve irrespective of results and focus on perfecting the flexible 15-man style, ball in hand, that gave the Kiwis a fair run for their money.

Tower of strength . . . Martin Johnson gives England a lift

Once the New Zealanders, who had not played a serious match for eight weeks, shook the ring-rustiness out of their system England had their work cut out to withstand successive waves of pressure from men who wanted to attack from any part of the field.

Lomu, who did not appear to be fully fit, threatened Sleightholme down the left flank less often than had been feared but the full-back Cullen was a dangerous jack-in-the-box in broken play and the right-wing Vidiri showed a speed of thought in setting up an early try for Brooke with a quick throw-in that matched his breathtaking pace.

In the final half-hour England began to lag behind the Kiwis in fitness, pace and explosive power in the tackle, crucially failing to put opponents on the ground at the genesis of each attack. Professionalism should enable England to achieve standards of physical excellence that put them on level terms with the southern-hemisphere nations by next summer. "Ultimately the pace of the game got to England and that was the decisive factor among the loose forwards," declared John Hart, the New Zealand coach who is probably the most advanced thinker in world rugby.

Significantly the two oldest players on the pitch, Sean Fitzpatrick (33) and Michael Jones (31), finished as strongly as the youngest men, setting a standard of sustained commitment allied to instinctive know-how that turned the tide against England with a vengeance. Equally daunting was the 21-year-old flanker Andrew Blowers, whose instant decision-making — which earned him a try just after half-time — frequently set the English back row problems they found difficult to resolve.

England, though, did have men of substance who threatened an upset for much of the afternoon. No Kiwi forward was more dynamic than Johnson or more positive than Sheasby. Stimpson, rock solid under the high ball, rattled opponents with some big hits, Adebayo frequently charged into the heart of the Kiwi defence, and Sleightholme gained Brownie points in both attack and defence.

Ultimately it was the Barbarians' replacement fly-half Carlos Spencer who destroyed England with two penalty goals and a spectacular try from a laser-like break from behind a ruck; that, with his conversion, gave his side a 29-19 lead. The elegant Vidiri added a late try after Gomarsall kicked the ball straight into Kiwi hands. Painful lessons, punishing results — but plenty of power and pride to persevere with.

International match: Wales 19 Australia 28

Wallabies' firepower leaves dragon breathless

A TORRENT of Welsh passion, fleshed out by 14 points from the boot of Jonathan Davies, briefly threatened a rare triumph over one of the giants of the southern hemisphere at Cardiff Arms Park on Sunday, *writes Robert Armstrong*.

Ultimately, though, Australia had sufficient skill and power to fashion three tries, two conversions and three penalty goals, more than enough to give the dragon's tail a severe tweaking.

At the end of his 101st and last international David Campese, who was involved in the build-up to two tries, stood in the centre, gave a wistful two-handed wave, and seconds later was gone. It was a poignant finale to a glittering career which he was unable to embellish by adding to his record total of 64 Test tries.

Whether the 34-year-old Davies will play for Wales against South Africa on December 15 must be open to question, notwithstanding his faultless kicking. He still has abundant tactical nous but the burst of pace has disappeared.

On Sunday Davies never had the remotest chance of releasing his three-quarters. "I was disappointed with the result; Australia dominated the game and we fought back but it wasn't enough," he said.

Thomas, the pacy Bridgend centre, had opened up a tantalising route to victory after 55 minutes with a splendid interception try that saw him sprint virtually the length of the field.

However, that proved to be the only occasion on which the Australians allowed their defensive organisation to slip: mostly the beleaguered Welsh spent the afternoon in their own half, relying heavily on the deathless goalkicking of Davies to stay in touch.

Campese admitted that he had knocked on seconds before Australia's opening try, an infringement that the official Ian Ramage missed. But overall that hardly mattered because the Wallabies were always capable of finding fresh ways to breach the Wales line with their complex patterns of play.

From the early stages Wales were compelled to play catch-up rugby. The gifted Burke swiftly followed his long-range penalty goal with an opportunist try in the left corner. Had Evans played to the whistle, the Wales wing could have touched down Howard's chipped kick, but the referee either ignored or did not see Campese's knock-on and Burke took advantage of Evans's fatal hesitation.

Midway through the first half Davies kicked a short-range penalty goal for offside. Almost immediately Campese found touch with a searching penalty kick just inside the corner flag and from the line-out the Wallabies drove to the line, where the No 8 Brial picked up and darted down the blind side to score.

Shortly before half-time Burke landed a towering penalty from 42 metres to put his side 18-6 in front.

A dramatic flurry of 10 points within six minutes put fresh heart into Wales and gave them a precious one-point lead.

But Australia stepped up a gear and, although Burke missed a 25-metre penalty, in the 70th minute the full-back landed a 30-metre attempt for a 21-19 lead.

In the last minute Burke found touch close to the corner flag: from the line-out the Wallabies laid siege to the Welsh line and were duly awarded a penalty try when the hosts pulled down a scrum. Wales defended bravely but Australia simply had too much fire-power.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Undone by the Dons

ASTON VILLA, the Coca-Cola Cup holders and winners of two of the last three finals, went out of the competition at Selhurst Park last week, knocked out in the fourth round by in-form Wimbledon, who extended their unbeaten run to 16 games.

Villa dominated the opening exchanges but were made to pay for the profligacy when Marcus Gayle slotted home from close range to score the game's only goal a minute before half-time. It was enough to take the Dons to only their second quarter-final in the League Cup.

Tottenham Hotspur were sent spinning out of the competition by First Division leaders Bolton Wanderers. A hat-trick from the Scotland striker John McGinlay continued his recent prolific run of form as the Premiership visitors suffered a 6-1 drubbing at Burnden Park.

Liverpool quelled mutterings on the terraces over their recent indifferent form by sending Arsenal packing 4-2. Their opponents in the quarter-final will be Middlesbrough, who edged out Newcastle United 3-1. Manchester United sent their reserve side to Leicester and paid with a 2-0 defeat. West Ham could manage only a 1-1 draw at home to lowly Stockport, while honours were also even between Oxford United and Southampton at the Manor Ground. Ipswich are through after beating Gillingham 1-0.

THANKS to a football match, children in one of the darkest corners of Europe will see some light. Britain's Football Association has launched an appeal for the orphans in Moldova, formerly a part of the Soviet Union. The FA and members of the England team are giving £20,000 to buy equipment for an orphanage near the capital, Kishinev. The players learned about the plight of the children when they played a World Cup qualifying match in Moldova earlier this year.

SHANE WARNE produced his best bowling spell since returning from injury to spin Australia to a 124-run victory in the second Test against the West Indies at Brisbane. With the help of prodigious turn, he claimed 4-95 as the tourists slumped to 215 in the second innings, giving Australia a 2-0 lead in the five-Test series. Brian Lara was dismissed cheaply in both innings. Scores: Australia 331 and 312 for 4 declared; West Indies 304 and 215.

MARK BUTCHER hit the sixth half-century of his nine innings during the current England A tour of Australia as his side romped to their fifth consecutive victory, over the Canberra Comets. But the winning streak came to end when they failed by six runs to beat Australian Capital Territory after being set a seemingly impossible target of 129 off 15 overs. The match was drawn.

A SENSATIONAL spell of bowling by South Africa's new paceman Lance Klusener sent India crashing to defeat by 329 runs in the second Test at Calcutta to level the series 1-1. The home side, chasing 467 for victory, never posed any threat as they were dismissed for a paltry 137. Klusener finished with 8-64, the highest number of wickets taken by a South African on his Test debut. Scores: South Africa 428 and 367-3; India 329 and 137.

ANOTHER debutant in devastating form was Pakistan's Mohammad Zahid, who destroyed New Zealand with seven for 66 as his side beat the tourists by an innings and 13 runs in the second and final Test in Rawalpindi on Sunday. The victory enabled Pakistan to level the series 1-1. Scores: New Zealand 249 and 168. Pakistan 430 (Saeed Anwar 149, Ejaz Ahmed 125).

COLIN MONTGOMERIE, Europe's No 1 golfer for the third year running, overcame his play-off jinx to win the Million Dollar Challenge in Sun City. He beat the local hero Ernie Els at the third extra hole after they had tied at 14 under par after four rounds. When he birdied the par-four 18th, it was his first win in six play-offs. Montgomerie's $1 million prize was four times what Els took as runner-up.



Montgomerie . . . in the money

STEPHEN HENDRY added a fifth UK Snooker Championship to his six world titles by beating fellow Scot John Higgins 10-9 in a dramatic finish in Preston on Sunday. After leading 8-4, Hendry found himself 8-9 down before taking the last two frames in most authoritative fashion to secure his 26th world-ranking title, only two fewer than Steve Davis's record. With his victory, Hendry pocketed £70,000 in prize money.

AFTER winning his fourth consecutive gold medal in the Olympics at Atlanta Britain's rowing star Steve Redgrave declared: "If ever you see me near a boat again, just shoot me." There was plenty of shooting, but only with the camera when the 34-year-old oarsman told a press conference that he is going for gold in Sydney in 2000. Redgrave and his Olympic coxless pair companion, Matthew Pinsent, plan to recruit two more rowers to make up a four for the Sydney Games.

KURT KINAST, an Austrian sailor suffering from illness, was airlifted by Royal Navy helicopter from the BT Global Challenge yacht Save the Children 750 miles miles off the Falklands for treatment on board HMS Lancaster. He was later described as "stable".